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DISCOURSES

ON SOME IMPORTANT

THEOLOGICAL SUBJECTS,

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HULL.

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"If the doctrine which I teach, be a flower gathered in the garden of the Lord—a part of the saving truth of the gospel—from whence, notwithstanding, poisonous creatures do suck venom; I can but wish it were otherwise, and content myself with the lot that hath befallen me, the rather, because it hath not befallen me alone."

HOOKER.

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PREFACE.

The publication of the following Discourses originated in an unanimous request made by the students of the Wymondley Theological Institution, that the Author would send to the press a volume of Sermons,—a request presented in such a form, that an absolute refusal on his part would have worn a most ungracious aspect. Not, however, anticipating a reception from the public, equally encouraging with that with which he has been honoured in an exceedingly secluded sphere of labour, and almost limited to an academic audience, he has ventured on the publication of six only. In the selection of subjects, he has been guided by what he conceives to be the prevailing spirit and character of the times.

The distinctive features of the present age are active zeal for the spread of Christianity, as a provision of grace for the salvation of the world; and at the same time, a general disregard of its authority and its sanctions, as containing a code of laws for the direction of conscience and the government of life. The most noble distinction of the gospel is this, that its peculiar facts and doctrines are subservient to its design as a moral system, purposing, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit, to establish in the heart the dominion of truth and righteousness, to purify the motives of action, to form a holy character, and to produce a cheerful piety and habitual conformity to the will of God. That this ultimate design of Christianity has been to an alarming extent lost sight of, and superseded by a subtle and insidious spirit of Antinomianism, must be regarded as one of the most portentous signs of the times, demanding the serious consideration of every man who is interested in the honour of religion, considered as a devout principle of obedience to God, in the welfare of his country, and in the prospects of the human race.

In tracing the circumstances which have led to a result so much to be deplored, the first consideration that presents itself is, the almost universal practice of the ministers of the evangelical faith of preaching on doctrinal subjects, if not to the entire exclusion of moral topics, still omitting a distinct enforcement of the particular duties enjoined by the divine law. This has been exposed with admirable discrimination and force of reasoning, by Mr. HALL, in his preface to Chase's "Antinomianism Unmasked." In the course of a few pages of fine and just disquisition, that incomparable writer may be said to have exhausted this argument. And it may be regarded as not the least happy production of an intellect at once comprehensive and acute, which grasps with ease the most difficult subjects it may attempt, unravels the most intricate, or discovers the precise line which terminates the progress of investigation, leaving the reader satisfied, in almost all cases, that if any thing remains undone, the failure is to be traced, not to the individual, but to the barrier which limits and circumscribes every effort of the human

mind. But the evil has extended farther. The doctrines of Christianity have not only been taught as sterile dogmas, but, separated from their practical results, they have themselves been disfigured, corrupted, shaped to accommodate some metaphysical theory, and divested of that simple grandeur in which they would appear, if proclaimed dogmatically, as they are revealed on the authority of heaven. The result is a scheme of faith, not only divorced from all connexion with morals, but absolutely incompatible with such an alliance, so that they who hold it, if they still retain their belief in the universality of the moral government of God, must found that belief on principles foreign to every other prominent article of their creed, and at variance with it—a scheme subversive of every intelligible principle which can be supposed to enter into a moral economy—a scheme so nearly identified with fatalism, that it abolishes the possibility of obligation and responsibility, by resolving all the volitions of created beings into the supreme will, and all their actions into the sole and exclusive agency of the Deity.

Hence man is no longer a probationer for eternal life. The death of Christ had an exclusive reference to the salvation of the elect. The divine law is acknowledged, indeed, to be the rule of action, but obedience is separated from justification of life. Faith considered as a devout reception of truth, in deference to the testimony of God, is reduced to a simple reliance, or a blind assurance; it is, in fact, annihilated, while this unscriptural assurance is substituted in its place. The witness of the spirit is an inward persuasion identical with assurance, and not to be distinguished from it.—And thus, whatever attempts may be made to disguise the conclusion, the whole of Christianity, as a scheme of *doctrine*, may be summed up in absolute predestination ;—while, as a *practical* system, its only requirement is the belief that in that predestination the individual is included. These are the views, with various shades of difference, of multitudes of devout persons, who would startle with horror at finding themselves on the verge of the Antinomian gulf, or at being told that they stood in that awful predicament. Yet such views, when

analyzed, are destructive of all moral government; and if their malignant tendency is checked and controlled, in those who are subjects of divine grace, and in whom the errors of the understanding are balanced by the virtues of the heart, still religion, in such characters, being unsupported by a sound apprehension of the obligations of morality, must assume a most imperfect form; while, in the minds of individuals who are destitute of the principles of piety, they will operate with the force of a powerful narcotic, or of a deadly poison.

In constructing the following Discourses, the writer has proceeded on the principle, that all interpretations of the evangelical faith, which are at variance with the universality of the moral government of God, are founded on erroneous speculation—and, that every Christian doctrine is connected with corresponding duties, being designed to support that eternal morality in which the dominion of the Deity is founded, which is essentially related to the happiness of all created intelligences, and in subservience to which, all the dispensations of religion have been

modelled and arranged. He does not offer them as full and elaborate discussions on the various subjects which are treated of: many questions will suggest themselves, and many objections may be raised, which he does not particularly notice. But, of the main positions assumed, he is satisfied, that although assailed, they will remain impregnable, so long as that temple shall stand which is "built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets — Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

Of the happy effects produced on the Christian ministry by the more enlarged interpretation of the extent of the death of Christ, as implying a probationary state,—a subject touched upon in the conclusion of the first discourse,—a striking illustration occurs in the preaching and writings of Richard Baxter, compared with those of Jonathan Edwards. Both were men of prodigious intellect, and of piety not less distinguished, so that it would be difficult to select their equals from amongst the greatest and best of the human race. It is therefore extremely

interesting to observe the different effects produced upon the minds of such men by their different views of divine truth. Something, no doubt, may be put to the account of original character and temperament, which led to the adoption, by each, of their several views of the divine administration. But again, their principles would tend to fix that character, and foster that temperament. Baxter, proceeding on the broad ground of the Scriptures, and making his metaphysics subservient to a scheme of doctrine accordant with the unsophisticated moral sense, is remarkable for the fervour and energy of his appeals, the tenderness of his expostulations, the glow of expansive feeling with which he portrays the love of God to a revolted world, and the noble freedom with which he applies the various topics which suggest themselves to his mighty genius, to the hopes, the fears, the trembling passions, the awakened reason, the consciousness of responsibility, which no guilt of apostacy has expelled from the human breast. He takes his stand upon the unassailable principle—"No man in the world doth perish for

Adam's sin alone." The theology of Edwards more systematic, and apparently more consistent because its doctrines were squared to a meta physical theory, was founded upon absolute predestination, not to be distinguished from the philosophical necessity of Hartley, Hume, and Priestley, but by the attempt to engraft upon it the great doctrines of Christianity, and to reconcile with it a moral administration, terminating in eternal rewards and punishments. His preaching and his practical writings, accord precisely with what might be expected from such a system, embraced by a man of transcendent ability and devotion. In his hortatory addresses to the ungodly, while he aims to awaken his own sensibilities, with a view to the sympathy of others, it is evident that his native intensity of feeling is oppressed by some deadening power, some dark spell which sits with leaden and icy influence upon his soul. His address has the awfulness, together with the cold and dreary majesty, of fate; and when he discourses on his favourite topics, "The wicked useful in their destruction only,"—"Sinners in the hands of an angry God,"

—"the justice of God in the damnation of sinners,"—it is with a calmness that is terrible—the unperturbed tranquillity of a man who has reasoned out his point, and then pronounces his stern conclusion with the oracular voice of destiny. When Baxter, as in the Saint's Rest, describes the misery of those who lose it, he makes us feel that he was a man of like passions with others, that his own spirit flinches and recoils from the contemplation of scenes, which duty compels him to exhibit to a regardless world. Like the Redeemer, he weeps over lost souls. But when Edwards suspends the reprobate sinner, as by a hair, over the flaming abyss of perdition, we feel as if in the presence of one of the ministers of divine wrath, who has himself no compunctious visitings of nature, but with complacent firmness executes the judgments of heaven. Nor are we surprised, after witnessing his own self-possession while indulging in the most appalling imaginations, to be told by him, that to behold the miseries of the lost, will be a capital ingredient in the cup of immortal fruition. "The wicked," he says, "will be destroyed and

tormented in the view of the saints, and other inhabitants of heaven; when the saints in heaven shall look upon the damned in hell, it will prove to them a greater sense of their own happiness; the misery of the damned will give them a greater sense of the distinguishing grace and love of God to them, that he should from all eternity set his love on them, and make so great a difference between them and others, who are of the same species, and have deserved no worse of God than they. When they shall look upon the damned and see their misery, how will heaven ring with the praises of God's justice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the saints!" While we revere the memory of each of these illustrious servants of God, it does not seem difficult to determine which of the two breathed most of the Spirit of Christ; and the presumption is in favour of that class of principles, whose tendency was to produce the nearest resemblance to the apostolic ministry.

The view which is taken of saving faith, in the second discourse, if the author is not mistaken, corresponds with that seemingly para-

doxical, yet profound observation of Pascal, "The heart has its arguments, with which reason is not acquainted; we feel this in a thousand instances. It is the heart which feels God, and not reason. This is perfect faith—God known to the heart." Pascal was a man of too sound a mind to dissociate reason from religion, and too evangelical a Christian to make it the substance of religion. He means to say, that to render belief efficacious, it must be connected with a devout state of the affections, and that where the heart rests upon God, the mind will cheerfully acquiesce in all his known will—conscious of its miseries, it will sweetly repose upon his grace. In other words, saving faith takes its character, not so much from the truths which it receives, as from the religious principle with which it is allied, and from which it derives its vitality as a stimulus to confidence and obedience.

The discourse on Christian Assurance was written in consequence of a passage which arrested the author's attention while reading the Memoir of the Rev. Legh Richmond. It occurs

in a part of the work composed by one of the family of that excellent individual, and which, breathing a spirit of filial affection and reverence, as well as of tender piety, is at the same time distinguished by an ingenuous representation of facts, such as is seldom met with in Christian biography; a class of writings, more than any other calculated to deceive by the partialities and concealments of friendship. The passage is as follows: "The last time he spoke to me on personal religion, he endeavoured to establish my mind in the doctrine of assurance, and enlarged on its importance, and its tendency to promote both comfort and obedience. He pointed to Archbishop Leighton as my pattern: 'See how holily and lovingly that man walked with God, because he believed that his salvation was safe and settled, that he was chosen in Christ. Try, my dear child, to expand your views; look at the magnificent scheme of salvation; the contract between the Father and his eternal Son. How much better to look out of self, and see all perfect in Christ. You will never be happy and strong, until you grasp the covenant plan of

redemption. You live upon self too much: you will get misery and despair; but nothing else, by looking to yourself. Live upon Christ; he has done all for you, if you could but believe it.'"—*Grimshawe's Memoir*, 3d. Ed. p. 619.

Considering that any sentiments expressed under circumstances of peculiar interest and solemnity, by a Christian minister who was held in extraordinary veneration by the public, are likely to have great influence on the popular mind; and that the sentiments above recorded are liable to very serious abuse; the writer does not conceive it to be inconsistent with the profound regard in which he holds the memory of the author of "The Dairyman's Daughter," to state what he conceives to be a more safe, more scriptural, and not less consolatory view of the doctrine of assurance.

The fourth discourse is on a subject of immense importance, respecting which, correct views are the more to be desired, since gross misconceptions prevail relative to every part of the work of the Holy Spirit, and mischievous results are produced in the extravagances of fanaticism, and

the needless exasperation of infidelity. If any individual competent to the subject, would give to the public a copious dissertation on this momentous doctrine, written in a popular style, and with practical illustrations, he would be a benefactor to the church of God.

Sander's Green, Stevenage,
May 8, 1830.

DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

2 Corinthians v. 14.

One died for all.

Butler has shown in his Analogy, the most profound perhaps of uninspired writings, that supposing the doctrine of necessity to be true, it would nevertheless be impossible to disprove, that, in point of fact, men are treated, under the moral administration of the Deity, precisely as if they were free agents, placed in a state of probation, fit subjects of reward or punishment, responsible for their conduct, and rendered happy or miserable according to their habitual choice of a righteous or sinful life. Exercising deliberation, choice, preference, and acting from certain

principles and to certain ends, they both have within them the consciousness of being free agents, and as such they actually reap the fruit of their doings. The notion, therefore, of necessity, or of fatality, whether founded in truth or in error, has no direct bearing upon the practical realities of life—with respect to *them*, it is as if it were not true. Hence it follows, that no serious, no thoughtful man, would regard the abstract notion of necessity as absolving him from moral responsibility, or as supplying him with an excuse, if he should yield to the impulse of criminal passions, in opposition to the dictates of reason, of conscience, and of religion. Such a persuasion, falsified by universal experience, would be most absurd, and would tend to inevitable destruction.

The argument applies with equal force to the Christian doctrine of predestination. In whatever way that doctrine may be explained—whether the divine decrees concerning the salvation of the elect, and the perdition of the reprobate, are conditional or absolute—it is as incontrovertible a fact as any which is the subject of divine revelation or of human belief, that the Bible nowhere represents this predestination of the final allot-

ment of the good, or the unalterable doom of the wicked, as proceeding on the principle that mankind are the mere passive recipients of good or evil, as superseding their responsibility, as in any sense incompatible with a state of probation, or inconsistent with the dominion which God maintains over his revolted creatures, considered as a moral administration. Throughout the sacred Volume, in all communications and revelations of his will, the Sovereign of the world addresses men as capable of exercising discernment in their choice or rejection of good or evil—as being responsible to him for every thought, word, and deed—and, in short, as possessed of whatever qualities may be necessary to constitute them moral agents, and fit them for a probationary course. Whatever views, therefore, are at variance with this, must be mistaken and antiscriptural, since the *facts* of the Bible are no more to be disputed or contravened, than the facts which are apparent in the ordinary or unvarying course of providence.

It would seem that these considerations have been overlooked by a large proportion of those who profess to receive, as an article of their faith, the Christian doctrine of predestination. Instead

of leaving it where the Scriptures have left it, not at all interfering with moral agency, moral claims, or moral obligations, they have made it the key-stone of the arch of their theological system, in which every thing is made to meet and centre as the point of coherence and support. To maintain every other part of the word of God in supposed harmonious subordination to this, they have found it expedient to explain away obvious and important facts. The doctrine of predestination is made to supersede human liberty, in regard to all the practical purposes of a moral economy. The entire human race are no longer, since the fall, subject to personal responsibilities; having lost, through the first transgression, whatever was essential to constitute man a proper subject of probation. All are supposed to have had their probationary course in the original head and representative of the human race, and to have lost it irrecoverably by his one act of apostacy. The value of the sacrifice of the Son of God, on the same erroneous principle, is limited to an atonement for those who shall be actually partakers of the grace of life; and "the sins of the *whole* world" is restricted to mean the sins of the elect only, since, as is affirmed, it

cannot be that Christ died in any sense for those of whom it was foreknown that they were not written in the book of life. When we find this mode of interpreting the great facts of revelation sanctioned by names of high authority, and deservedly held in veneration by the church of God; when we discover extraordinary talents for deep reasoning, and all the resources of the dialectic art combined with metaphysical acumen, employed in defence of this scheme of theology; when, moreover, men who were known habitually to walk with God, cheerfully acquiesced in it, on the supposed ground of its being the truth, and derived from the contemplation of its peculiarities the highest religious satisfaction, as being, in their estimation, illustrative in a pre-eminent degree of the divine glory—we might deem it an act of hazardous presumption to express a different opinion, were it not that fallibility attaches to all mortal minds; that others, of not less enlargement of intellect and depth of piety, have taken other ground; and that there is a still more august tribunal open to our appeal. No system which can be resolved into absolute fatalism, can be proved to be the system of the Bible; and that spurious predestinarian scheme which anni-

hilates human liberty, and so literally reduces man to absolute nothingness, as to render it impossible that human life should be probationary, is essentially such a system. It blots out one half of the book of God. The only true key to the majestic scheme of the Bible is supplied in the impressive words of Fuller. "That there is a consistency between the divine decrees and the free agency of man, I believe; but whether I can account for it, is another thing. Whether it can be accounted for at all, so as to enable us clearly to comprehend it, I cannot tell. Be that as it may, it does not distress me. I believe in both, because both appear to me to be plainly revealed." Upon this broad and scriptural ground, if we cannot arrive at any conclusion but such as may be perplexed with an inconsistency, real or apparent, with the metaphysics or theology of some particular denomination of Christians, still it is our duty to receive it, with all its mysterious or inexplicable consequences, upon the authority of the word of God, consoled by the recollection, that what to our minds may present discrepancies, may, in the view of the Eternal mind, be the perfection of harmony; and that points, to reconcile which we are dis-

qualified by our present ignorance, may be of entire agreement in the view of an Infinite Intelligence.

With these preliminary observations kept in view, let us proceed to inquire into the import of the fact stated in our text. "One died for all."

That the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and that under the veil of his human nature he screened the effulgence of his divinity, in order to the redemption of a fallen race, is a doctrine into the scriptural evidence of which I shall not at this time enter. The atonement, as the divinely appointed way of a sinner's acceptance with God, is one great distinctive doctrine of revealed truth—the foundation of hope to the church of God upon earth, while it breathes a living inspiration into the songs of the spirits of just men made perfect in glory. For "they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

Assuming, therefore, that the death of Christ was a provision of infinite mercy for the expiation of human guilt, I shall immediately proceed to inquire what is the extent of the value of the atonement, or in what sense it may be declared that "One died for all."

It cannot, I apprehend, be rightly understood to mean, that all the fallen race will actually partake of the entire benefits procured by his death, or, in other words, that all will be eventually saved in virtue of his mediation. Against this interpretation of the universalists, with whatever delightful anticipations some great and holy minds have looked for the final restoration of all mankind, both fact and Scripture appear to be arrayed. It is at variance with the apparent fact, that multitudes who have lived in sin, die without repentance and without hope; and that for such incorrigible wickedness, the Bible holds out no other prospect than that of condign punishment, fearfully shadowed forth as "the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is not quenched." If, however, it will not admit of a latitude of interpretation which shall embrace the actual salvation of the universal race of man, neither must it be so limited as to accord with

the views of those who, fettered by their predestinarian notions, understand by the word "all," some individuals of *all sorts*, conditions, and nations of men—that is, when explained, only a comparatively small number, meaning the elect people of God. To put such a limited construction on terms, in their ordinary acceptation comprehensive or universal, is objectionable, unless some real necessity can be pleaded, on every sound principle of biblical interpretation; and would, if tolerated, justify the most capricious or unhallowed commentators, who "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction." Nor is the divine foreknowledge, nor the doctrine of predestination, ever so stated in the New Testament as necessarily to infer, that the death of Christ had no reference and no value but in regard to those who would eventually partake of its saving efficacy.

The question, therefore, again returns; and the reply which to my judgment appears most in accordance with the general tenor of the Scriptures, may be made in the following statement—a statement presented with diffidence, as, after all, extremely imperfect, there being a mystery connected with the atonement which infinite wisdom

has not deemed fit to explain. The human race being exposed, by depravity and transgression, to the curse of the violated law of God, it was essential to the honour of the divine administration, that punishment should fall upon the guilty themselves, or upon a substitute both qualified and willing to suffer in their stead. The latter alternative was adopted by infinite wisdom and mercy. And the righteous God having resolved to save the world from the effects of human delinquency, and yet to establish the rectitude of his moral government, sent his Son into the world, a voluntary intercessor, to bring sinners unto God. Such was the dignity of his person—Deity and humanity in mysterious and ineffable union; and such the depth of his humiliation and bitterness of his death, that ample demonstration was afforded to the intelligent creation of the immutable righteousness of Heaven. This awful testimony being given of the divine hatred of sin, the Deity might at his pleasure, without any imputation on the moral purity of his dominion, or appearing however indirectly to countenance revolt, present to the wretched the means of happiness, and provide for the lost immortal salvation. In this sense, "one died

for all:" as it is written, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." Christ, therefore, "died for all," inasmuch as his mediatorial sacrifice has put all men in a situation, if no other obstacle interposed, for receiving mercy at the hands of God in perfect congruity with the righteousness of the divine government. It does not insure the absolute redemption of the entire race, because multitudes may still abuse their moral agency by remaining impenitent, walking in voluntary darkness, living and dying in sin. But in that case they cannot charge the Author of their being with having left them, abandoned outcasts, without the possibility of mercy. Could we even conceive of a poor pagan, under the consciousness of ignorance and misery, amid the solitudes of the desert or the shrines of Delhi, pouring forth his heart, a suppliant for mercy, although "to the unknown God;" no man can show that this abject child of sin and sorrow would not find grace, although of the Author of his redemption he may remain still uninformed, until his wondering eyes are opened upon the morning of the resurrection of the just. The death of Christ places the

whole human race under an economy of grace; under that economy they passed immediately after the fall, or the destruction of all future generations would have been anticipated by the death of the first transgressor; and if any fail to realize the blessings of this economy, their Maker is free from their blood.

This view of the subject is supported by a variety of considerations.

1. It is perhaps that view which would approve itself to a mind previously untrammelled by system, as the most simple, the most natural, and every way the most accordant, with the paternal character of God. Had we been informed, in general terms, that infinite mercy had made provision for the restoration of a fallen world, we should naturally conclude, until informed of the contrary, that to all, without exception, an opportunity would be presented of returning to their allegiance to God. In place of the proclamation of a universal amnesty, we should not look for *arbitrary* exclusions or selections, founded on no obvious principles of wisdom or of goodness, serving no important moral purpose, and to be resolved into an act of mere absolute sovereignty. We could not imagine

that the infinite intelligence would act *without motive*—without a motive wise, righteous, and determinate. Yet such is the representation of those, who substituting for the predestination of the Bible a scheme altogether different, or who drawing from it inferences respecting which the Scriptures are silent, affirm that in leaving one portion of his revolted creatures to perdition, and in restoring the other to himself, the Deity intends only a manifestation of the sovereignty of his grace. On that principle, it is clear, that with equal propriety, with equal grace, the lost might have been saved, the saved might have been lost; the sovereignty of the divine will would in either case have been equally manifest; nor is there any motive assignable for the chosen not having been rejected—for the rejected not having been chosen. Nay more, there would have been as great a manifestation of sovereignty in the salvation of all as of a single transgressor, and surely not less of grace. How much more worthy would it be of the profound and awful reverence due to the eternal mind, to suppose him always acting from motives of infinite wisdom and love. How much more accordant with the revealed riches of his grace, to assume in the

present case, unless otherwise instructed by himself, that since all have been subjected to death under the same economy and by the same means; to all, if to any, the provisions of the great redemption would be made applicable, unless some adequate moral consideration existed for an opposite procedure. If the grace of Heaven is magnified in the restoration of one portion of the human family, how much more resplendent in beauty and in majesty, when it comes forth from the mercy-seat, as the angel of the Apocalypse, having the everlasting gospel to proclaim to them that dwell on the earth: to every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people!

2. It is not possible to infer, from any principle or any fact of the Bible, that the sacrifice of Christ is not of value sufficient to expiate the sins of the entire fallen race. That precious blood which could avail to the redemption of one individual soul, must suffice, so far as its own intrinsic worth is concerned, to cancel the crimes of a guilty universe. Arguments to the contrary rest upon vague and unsupported assumptions. When, for instance, it is affirmed, that the sufferings of our Lord, considered as the

price of their ransom, amounted precisely to that degree of misery which the collective body of his chosen people would have endured, had they not been saved; that he underwent exactly that, and no more than that, which a limited number of individuals would otherwise have experienced, thus leaving no means of salvation for the remaining portion of the human race; we are at a loss to know on what reasonable or what scriptural principle such an argument proceeds. The whole appears to be a fallacy, originating in the misuse of a simple metaphor; for when we are said to be "*bought* with a *price*," it cannot be intended by the sacred writer, that the figure, used by way of partial illustration, should be construed into a full and exact exposition of the atonement of Christ. So far is it from being true, that the value of the atonement consists in the exact proportion that subsisted between the sufferings of the Redeemer, and those which the elect must have endured, had they tasted for themselves the cup of bitterness; that, in point of fact, there could be no proportion, no resemblance between these sufferings, either in nature or in degree.

In regard to the *nature* of the sufferings of lost

souls, they must consist in remorseful remembrances, and in the incurable anguish of an awakened and accusing conscience—a species of misery which could not for a moment assail the sinless and immaculate spirit of the Son of God. Nor as a question of *degree* is there any reason to believe that the sufferings of Christ bore an exact proportion to those from which his redeemed church is rescued by his mediation. Far from being equal to the punishment of myriads of condemned spirits, they might not perhaps be greater than one individual may be capacitated to endure in an endless duration of pain. In his *divine* nature he could not suffer. To speak of sorrows and of death inflicted upon God, the infinite and immutable Spirit of the universe, is to employ language from the absurdity of which reason revolts; nor can they who use it escape the charge of impiety, but by taking refuge in the plea of undesigning ignorance. And the *humanity* of our Lord could endure only the sufferings of humanity. They were those of an individual who was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," and constituted "in all things like unto his brethren." And if, therefore, the sufferings of the "man Christ Jesus," which neither in

nature nor in duration corresponded precisely with those which the redeemed might have experienced, were nevertheless available to their eternal redemption, why might they not suffice, if that were all, and no other obstacle opposed, to the salvation of the universal progeny of man?

Moreover, on supposition that Christ endured the exact amount of misery which the redeemed must otherwise have experienced, the consequence follows, that notwithstanding the design of God that the gospel should be the most perfect exhibition of his love, his wisdom, and his power, the scheme of redemption has failed, after all, to lessen the sum of misery in the universe; the only result consisting in the transfer of this misery, without any mitigation, from the guilty to the innocent. Such an hypothesis seems hard to be reconciled with a system whose *wisdom* is the object of angelic contemplation, and whose *grace* will be the theme of wonder and of praise, through an immortal duration of happiness, to the ransomed church of God. It is more easy to conceive that the sufferings of Christ were rendered meritorious, not so much by their intensity as by the infinite dignity of his person.

3. The explication now proposed is accordant with the current language of the Bible, both with its explicit statements of the extent of the divine mercy, and its unqualified invitations to sinners. In most solemn forms of asseveration has God declared that he has no delight in the destruction of the guilty, but rather in their restoration to his love; so that the repentance of a sinner occasions joy in heaven. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways, and live." "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance." In exact harmony with this broad and unlimited assertion of the divine compassions, the scriptures represent Him as having made ample provision, in the atonement of Christ, for every penitent sinner. "Jesus was made a little lower than the angels, that he, by the grace of God, should taste of death for every man." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the *whole* world." On this plenitude of grace, and all-sufficiency of the Saviour, invitations to sinners, equally compre-

hensive and universal, are founded. "He commandeth *all* men, everywhere, to repent." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth say, Come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The language of our Lord, when upbraiding the Jews with the rejection of himself, corresponds with this series of arguments, and affords a remarkable confirmation of their truth—"Ye *will not* come to me, that ye may have life." He does not tell them, that, by an irrevocable sentence of reprobation, they were doomed to perish in obduracy of heart; but that they were sealing their own perdition by their own inveteracy of guilt. Similar in tone was the plaintive lamentation of the Redeemer, when he drew near to the city, and wept over it, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killedst the prophets, and stonedst them that were sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" Friend of the wretched! Saviour of the lost! Jesus, thou Son of God! wouldst thou have addressed even those who rejected thy grace, with pathos and tenderness like these, had there been no provision of

mercy—had thy precious blood been unequal to the expiation of their sins—had they been doomed by an irreversible decree, apart from their own voluntary guilt, to the bitterness of the second death, and thus placed beyond the possibility of redemption! Compassionate Redeemer! thou wouldst not thus insult their calamities with the mockery of mercy, nor charge them with contempt of grace which was never designed for their acceptance.

To the preceding statements no substantial objections can be founded on such passages of Scripture as appear to assign a more limited extent to the Christian sacrifice. The texts in which Christ is said to lay down his life for his "*sheep*," and to purchase the "*church*" with his own blood, do not invalidate the more extensive import of those other passages in which he is said to die for *all*, and to be the propitiation for the sins of the *whole* world. There is no inconsistency in the two statements to render it necessary that either the one or the other should be rejected; for since the whole includes its parts, the redemption of the church is included in the shedding of the blood of the universal sacrifice. And if the salvation of the church, the spiritual

body of Christ, be frequently or emphatically mentioned as the final cause of his death, it is accounted for on the principle, that although the value of the death of Christ is infinite, forming a ground on which mercy may be extended to *all* men; yet, since, through the incorrigible depravity of many, the actual benefits of his death will be experienced in their fulness only by his redeemed people, he may be said in this sense, with strict propriety, to die especially for *them*. For, had it not been *foreknown* that some would be indubitably saved, we have no reason for believing that he would have engaged in the work of redemption, seeing that in that case he might have died in vain. Still this does not interfere with the more extensive value and applicability of his sacrifice, nor does it appear that the two representations in any way clash.

If it be objected, that an economy of grace, to meet the necessities of a degenerate world, must provide for their effectual regeneration, not less than for their pardon; it is sufficient to reply, that, compared with the case supposed by many, that the great mass of those who virtually perished by the sin of the first transgressor, were left in remediless perdition—*that* is, a state of grace which puts them all in a course of proba-

tion for themselves, and secures to those who obtain the divine favour a happiness immeasurably more perfect than was lost by the original act of disobedience. The fact, moreover, being established, that Christ died for all, it follows that every other suitable provision was made to meet the exigency of the circumstances. Of the amount of that exigency, the Deity alone can be supposed capable of judging. In our present ignorance of the philosophy of mind, of the nature of spirit, and of the secret process by which divine grace influences the heart, it would be presumption to dogmatize; nor is it for us to pronounce that there can be no grace short of actual salvation—no mercy vouchsafed while the Deity still withholds that miraculous effusion of the Spirit, which makes the return and reconciliation of the sinner an infallible result. The objection overlooks the moral agency of man; not unnaturally perhaps, since it proceeds from those whose views of divine truth imply that man is no longer a moral agent, the fall having reduced the entire race to be passive victims of destiny. "It is no wrong," says Baxter, "to one that hath his reason and liberty, to give him his own choice;" and we may add, it is reconcileable with large manifestations of grace.

These arguments supply matter for grave consideration, although they may not be deemed conclusive by every ingenuous inquirer after truth. They do not proceed on any specific view of the doctrine of predestination; but, in strict accordance, it is presumed, with the example of the sacred writers in similar cases, they pass by that doctrine, as being irrelevant to matters which have a practical bearing, and as calculated, in the present state of our knowledge and our faculties, to introduce perplexity into our views of moral responsibility and obligation —a result too frequently realized in the case of those who substitute for the predestination of the bible, a scheme not essentially different from absolute fatalism.

In connexion with this summary of arguments, it may tend to confirm their validity, if we notice some general considerations intimately related to that view of the subject which they are brought forwards to support.

1. It imparts a more benign aspect to the character and administration of the Deity, and consequently tends to promote a more profound and implicit confidence in his love. In one respect there is no difference between the more intelli-

gent portion of those who affirm that Christ died only for the elect, and those who are at variance with them. It is a principle common to both, that none but those whose hearts are right with God will inherit his kingdom—and that not an individual of this description will finally be lost. The difference relates to the cause to which we are to trace the eventual perdition of those who fail of eternal life; whether it is, that no provision of mercy was made for them after their loss of all that constitutes the dignity of man as a moral agent, and his happiness as the expectant of immortality, through the sin of the first transgressor; or whether, being subsequently to the fall placed under an economy of grace, they failed of an interest in the way of salvation through their own determined wickedness in an ignoble abuse of reason and suppression of the dictates of conscience. If it can be made to appear, to the satisfaction of those who have faculties for arriving by a circuitous method at a distant conclusion, that the former scheme may be reconciled with the known perfections of the Deity, with his paternal character in all its loveliness, with a moral administration, and with all the substantial facts of the case; still to the

great mass of mankind, to the most obvious apprehensions of ALL, previous to any deep consideration of the subject, the latter supposition would appear more consistent with the riches of grace, and most entirely divested of every harsh, repulsive, and doubtful character. In the former instance, it is the understanding that ultimately acquiesces in the supposed soundness of arguments which it may find difficult to refute. It is the logician or the metaphysician, calmly or sullenly resting in conclusions which appear to him inevitable, unless by rushing into others more perplexed and questionable. In the latter it is the unsophisticated moral sense that approves; it is the heart, that yields at once, satisfied, delighted, sweetly resigning itself to the unbounded confidence which such a representation of the Deity is fitted to inspire. Nor ought we to be induced, but by some gigantic potency of argument which shall crush all objection, to surrender to the abstractions of the metaphysician a truth which stands upon the ground of moral reasoning; that species of reasoning which can with most propriety be applied to all subjects connected with the moral government of God; and as opposed to which, arguments

purely metaphysical are altogether irrelevant. It is obvious that confidence the most entire, and faith the most simple, in the gracious intentions of the Deity, must precede the exercise of that trust and love and filial reverence, which are essential to the character and the happiness of the Christian: to inspire that confidence, so that it shall supersede the degenerate passions of distrust and fear, is evidently the design of the Christian scheme of salvation: and it is a presumption by no means to be despised, in favour of the view now taken of the infinite value and universal applicability of the sacrifice of Christ, that it presents to us the mercy of God in a light the most unequivocal, the most beautiful and consolatory: "Who is the Saviour of ALL men, and especially of them that believe."

2. It leaves unimpaired the moral obligations of mankind, which are not so obvious on any other view of the subject.

That no corruption, no depth of apostacy, no alienation from God into which mankind have gone, has been of a nature to weaken responsibility or impair moral obligation, is manifest from the whole tenor of the word of God. The existence of religion supposes claims of a sacred

nature on the part of Deity, and correspondent duties on the part of man. The abolition of such claims and duties is the abolition of religion; and man ceases to be the subject of law, and needs not apprehend a day of judgment. It is manifestly of immense importance, that the persuasion of responsibility should be deeply fixed in the human mind. Without it, conscience loses her authority, reason is dethroned, and passion, depraved and selfish, will assume the dominion of the heart. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. The sinner unconvinced of guilt, will never flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel. The believer, whose notions of moral obligation are unsettled, whatever restraint may be imposed on the corruption of his nature by the principle of grace, or by the constraining efficacy of the love of Christ, will be destitute of that clear and determinate sense of duty, without which a right state of the affections would be an insufficient guarantee for universal obedience. And while all the great principles which enforce allegiance to God are thus involved in confusion, the flood-gates are thrown open for a deluge of reckless impiety and antinomian licentiousness.

To obviate the objection made to that scheme of doctrine of which the absolute corruption of man, and the absolute predestination of the elect are the fundamental principles—that it destroys responsibility—theologians have recourse to the distinction between *moral* and natural inability; a distinction so just and so important, when correctly understood, that it renders the incorrigible sinner self-condemned and "speechless." Just, however, as is the distinction in itself, and momentous as is the aspect it wears towards the guilty, it does not appear of so easy application toany system as to that which supposes man to be still a probationer, and the grace of the gospel, in some important sense, a real provision for all. On any other supposition, what is gained by this distinction? An inability to perform the duties of a religious creature, whether moral or natural, which is confessedly the result, the inevitable result of *necessity*, originating in circumstances over which the individual has no controul, and antecedent to his existence—an inability to which he is doomed by the very law and condition of his being—an inability entailed upon the entire family of man, from the hour of the apostacy of the first sinner —an inability so original and cognate as to be

identified with the nature and constitution of the human mind, so that we can as easily imagine the individual to extinguish, by an act of eternal suicide, his own soul, as to throw off, by a spontaneous effort, the fetters by which that soul is enthralled: an inability thus superinduced, let it be designated by whatever name, would appear to the common sense of mankind, rather as an apology than an aggravation of guilt; a calamity to be deplored, more than a crime to be punished. In the estimate of a man of plain understanding, unversed in subtle disputations, this moral impotence, obtained by inheritance and absolutely inevitable, would appear, as much as any scheme of fatalism could appear, to be at variance with moral obligation. Least of all would he acquiesce in the sentence of condemnation passed upon them who reject the Saviour, if it should appear that for *them* he never actually died, being restrained from undertaking their cause by that exclusive decree which doomed them to die, as they were born, in incorrigible hardness of heart, leaving them victims of stern necessity, to pass from the cradle to the tomb under the stamp and seal of perdition. Even the advocates of that scheme feel that they have not escaped

the difficulty by which it is encumbered, by the distinction alluded to ; and all that their ingenuity can effect is to show, that, *by possibility*, the number of the saved might even have been less—the results might not have been in any degree happier, if each individual of the human race had been put on his own probation, instead of having his destiny decided by the fall of the first sinner. Whether, however, the objection justly applies or not to that scheme, it is certain that man is to be rewarded or punished, as if in his individual capacity a fit subject of moral government. And the fact that Christ died for *all*, accords with that responsibility, violates no principle by which it is confirmed, and must be grossly misrepresented before it can appear to release the sinner from a single obligation, palliate his contempt of God, or his rejection of the only way of salvation. If through moral inability he dies in his sins, that inability is resolved into his own malignant disinclination to truth and goodness ; making his sin as entirely his own, as was the original transgression that of the first sinner ; nor does it suppose him under a greater necessity of perishing, than was the inhabitant of Eden before he tasted the forbidden fruit : since, although

his circumstances may appear in some respects less advantageous, and his temptations more numerous, he is placed under an economy in which, through the mediation of Christ, the obedience of faith is accepted, for that perfect conformity to the moral law, which in the present state is impossible.

3. It places on a simple and intelligible ground the warrant of the sinner to come to God through Jesus Christ, instead of perplexing him with the preliminary inquiry—whether he is of the number of the elect.

One of the most beautiful and affecting distinctions of the revealed way of salvation, and not less so of the form in which it is presented to the world, is its adaptation to the weakness and the fears of a guilty creature. That infinite and gracious intelligence, to whom all its provisions must be traced, has caused the word of God to be so constructed, and its facts so recorded, that the sorrows of the penitent may not terminate in despair; but that every trembling anxiety of the heart, under the poignant conviction of sin, should find its antidote in the amplitude and all-sufficiency of the grace of Christ. This benign intention, so perfectly in unison

with the genius of the gospel, is often countervailed by the consideration presented to the mind of the penitent, that Christ died only for the elect; from which the conclusion, whether just or erroneous, is drawn, that the sinner has no authority to come to the Saviour, until he has first "made his election sure." In minds naturally of a sanguine temperament, predisposed to view every subject through the medium of buoyant and hopeful feelings, and prompt to reach conclusions without regard to premises, wherever inclination or interest are concerned—in such minds, such a consideration would produce, perhaps, no permanent disquietude; a more hazardous result will probably follow; the hasty presumption that *they* are of the number of the chosen people, without any evidence on which a thoughtful man would dare to found a persuasion of such immense and awful magnitude. But with persons of sober reflection, persuaded of the importance, not only of a good hope but of a solid foundation on which to rest it, the effect is extremely different, and not seldom truly distressing. They are aware that a blind persuasion supplies no substantial evidence; and unable to discover any conclusive or even presumptive

proof of their being numbered with the elect, they are harassed with the dread of profanely intruding themselves, unauthorized and without warrant, into the presence of the Deity, as his reconciled children. Hence for a time their minds are destitute of those serene enjoyments, those profound consolations, which faith in Christ is fitted to impart. Fears, perplexities, and doubts assail their peace; and the conflict of hostile passions, the alternations of hope and despondency; the general conviction that the gospel is a scheme of transcendent mercy, accompanied with conscious ignorance of the manner in which that grace is to be sought and realized in their own particular case; produce a state of mind greatly to be commiserated, an intense anxiety or gloomy depression of the heart, for which no predestinarian notions which border upon fatalism can supply a legitimate remedy, and which can be relieved only by an intelligent apprehension of the invitation of our Lord, freely addressed to every child of contrition and of grief—"Come unto me, ALL ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" The secret purposes, the unrevealed decrees of heaven, cannot be the rule of human conduct;

and the individuals who are of the number of the elect have never been announced; the book of life in which their names are recorded, remains as yet unopened. The *warrant* to draw near to God, with the hope of acceptance, is to be found in the free, the unrestricted promises and invitations of the gospel, addressed to *all* the members of the fallen race. The encouragement to act upon that warrant is the fact, that the Lamb of the great sacrifice is the propitiation for the sins of the *whole* world. The simple statement of this stupendous fact at once enlarges our conceptions of the illimitable grandeur of the scheme of redemption, and simplifies the process by which we are to realize for ourselves the consolations of Christ. It supplies the broad and unquestionable ground of access to God through the Mediator. It is the sinner's refuge; it is the suppliant's plea, while, bending before the throne of mercy, he implores the grace of life; it is the hope of the believer amid the sorrows of his pilgrimage, and his solace in the hour of death. The reception of this master truth by a mind exercising humble faith in the veracity of God, insures a calm and settled peace, which prepares the soul for communion with the Father of spirits,

and yields a delightful foretaste of the undisturbed repose which awaits in heaven the nations of the saved.

4. It is the only principle in consistency with which the freeness of the gospel and the all-sufficiency of Christ can be proclaimed. Indefinite calls to faith and repentance, universal invitations addressed to sinners to embrace the promise of mercy, and to obtain redemption through the all-atoning blood of Christ, are indeed employed by many who limit the value of the sacrifice, or affirm that it was not the will of God that it should be of universal applicability. The authority of apostolic example in this particular is too cogent to be resisted. But the refinements, the subterfuges, the evident special pleading—unsatisfactory even to themselves—to which men of exalted minds have recourse in attempting to vindicate their consistency, supply a strong presumption against the truth of their principles. That cause must be more than doubtful which requires a subtle ingenuity in framing its defence, and an approach to disingenuousness of mind, before the arguments which support it can be regarded with entire complacency. To announce to a revolted world a universal amnesty, believing

at the same time that the intention to pardon is limited to a few; and to do this on the secret conviction, that none will accept this amnesty but the few for whom special provision is made by the mediatorial sacrifice—this is a procedure to which no man of unsophisticated character could submit without reluctance. Nor can it fail to produce in those who believe that God authorizes such conduct, a spirit more allied to the fraudulence of Jesuitism, than to the simplicity of Christ. The only ground on which the invitations of the gospel can be proclaimed with the generous freedom of the apostolic ministry, without secret qualifications and mental reservation, is the indefinite value, the universal applicability of the Christian sacrifice, equally available to the salvation of an individual, or, if haply they might repent, to the entire family of fallen man.

To the ministers of religion, to whom is vouchsafed the grace of proclaiming this message of eternal love, and to the Christian missionary especially, who, following in the steps of apostolic teachers, selects the wide world of unevangelized man for the field of his labours, it presents a substantial ground, unperplexed with metaphysical subtleties, on which to preach in all its

exuberant fulness, the mercy of Heaven, combining with the exhibition of the cross of Christ, appeals to the reason and to the conscience of the human race. In every respect it will have a powerful tendency, as a moral means, to qualify them for their exalted and arduous work, and insure an extensive portion of success.

In meditating upon the love of God, embracing in its tenderness the universal family of man, and giving up his only Son "for us ALL," their own souls will expand with a generous ardour, corresponding with their enlarged apprehensions of the majesty of the plan of redemption. They will rise to an elevation of thought and of feeling, beyond the influence of sectarian bigotry, with its disastrous power to contract and demoralize the heart, by having full in their view truths which appertain to the whole human race, and interests commensurate with the entire course of time and the range of the habitable world. The thought of addressing himself to men who, amidst all their degeneracy, debased, abject, sensualized as they are, retain enough of the dignity of reason and the power of conscience to be responsible to God for their disregard of his law, or insensibility to his grace; this thought will in-

spire the preacher with profound concern for their eternal welfare; and, by stimulating him to the exercise of his own powers, and awakening his most intense emotions, impart to his instructions and appeals all that can give pathos, energy, and persuasion to an impassioned and sacred eloquence. There are sympathies in human souls—chords which vibrate in mysterious and responsive unison—and the heart, constrained by the love of Christ, will communicate of its hallowed fervour to others, apparently, perhaps, torpid with the icy cold of selfishness and sin, yet wanting only the contact of a more seraphic spirit, to kindle into living warmth, and breathe for immortality. Nor will his confidence of success be shaken by the deep depravity opposed to the progress of truth; convinced that Christ could not have died in vain; that he had not died at all but on the certain foreknowledge of bringing many sons unto glory; and that "whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE NATURE OF THAT FAITH WHICH SECURES THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION.

JOHN vi. 53—55.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

THE instructions delivered by our divine Lord, when he was in the world, were frequently suggested by incidental occurrences, and show with what admirable wisdom he was endowed, to improve the passing scenes of life, for the accomplishment of the designs of his ministry, making every circumstance tributory to the information

and salvation of his hearers. In the present instance, Jesus Christ had recently performed that memorable miracle, in which five thousand persons were fed from five barley loaves and two small fishes; and the multitude, on the following day, having found him at Capernaum, again surrounded him, with the hope, perhaps, of having their curiosity gratified by another display of his miraculous power, or with the expectation of some secular advantage from following in the train of so extraordinary a leader. Our Lord, however, hastened to undeceive them, to expose the fallacy of any sordid hopes founded upon his miraculous power, and to divert their regards from the transitory interests of the present life to considerations of higher moment, intimating that it was *their* duty to seek, and *his* province to bestow blessings, in their nature and in their duration of transcendant value, and to be despised at the peril of their souls. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." For reasons, no doubt, infinitely wise, he does not proceed in plain

terms to explain what he meant by that food whose virtue would thus insure a blessed immortality: but, continuing to address them in figurative language, darkly and mysteriously adverted to the nature and means of his redemption, by suggesting that the bread of life was his own flesh and blood, and which were to be eaten and drunk, and without whose salutary influence none could enjoy eternal life. To the mass of his hearers, ignorant of the real import of what was typical or prophetic in the ancient economy, misled by blind prejudices, and victims of the most gross carnality, his words, of necessity, appeared fraught with paradox, and perplexed with absurdity. With the facts, however, which subsequently transpired before us, and with the clear discovery of the way of salvation contained in the apostolic epistles, the language of our Lord admits of an easy solution; and we find in it some of the most momentous truths which can be presented to the human mind—the vicarious SACRIFICE of Christ—the stupendous BLESSINGS secured by that sacrifice—and the necessity of a living and practical FAITH to those who would appropriate and enjoy these blessings.

These are subjects at all times of the first

magnitude and of the profoundest interest—but never more appropriate than in the prospect of meeting at the sacramental table; there to commemorate that death, which demonstrates the desperate wickedness of man, and the ineffable mercy of God.

I. Here is a distinct reference to the VICARIOUS SACRIFICE of Christ. That we are not mistaken in putting this interpretation upon our Lord's words, but that he had in view that great SACRIFICE of *propitiation* and *atonement* which he afterwards offered for the sins of the world, when he spoke of his *flesh* and his *blood*, may be proved by these considerations.

1. It will not admit of another interpretation which can be supported by sound argument, or resolved into any acknowledged principles of Christian truth. The Roman Church supposes that these words refer to the eucharist, and affirms that the body and blood of Christ are actually present in the bread and wine, so soon as these elements of the holy sacrament have been consecrated by the officiating priest; so that every communicant literally eats of the body and drinks of the blood of Christ. But this interpretation, involving all the contradictions and absurdities

of transubstantiation, every intelligent Protestant has agreed to renounce, as untenable on the ground of revelation, of sound argument, and of the most obvious dictates of common sense. It has led to one of the worst errors of Popery; by which a wafer is transmuted into a God, and that God, with inconceivable degradation to the human mind, first adored, and then devoured. The follies of Paganism are wisdom compared with this; nor throughout the reign of heathen idolatries shall we discover so deplorable an example of the prostration of intellect and the humiliation of man. It is not the submission of reason to faith, but the corruption of a pure faith by a depraved and dishonoured reason. Nor will it suffice to affirm, with the rejectors of the Christian doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, that in this discourse our Lord spoke only in metaphor of his religious instructions, and the moral advantages to be derived from a practical obedience to revealed truth. In this instance the language of Christ cannot be tortured to express such a meaning. That wisdom and knowledge are sometimes spoken of, by an appropriate and expressive figure, as the food of the mind, cannot be disputed. The apostle Paul uses the figure with

great grace and power, when, in speaking of some who were in the infancy, and others in the manhood of their Christian course, he describes himself as feeding the former with the milk, and the latter with the strong meat of the word. But this does not apply in the present case. Is there not a palpable distinction between wisdom, instruction, religious truth generally, and *flesh* and *blood?* Does our Lord speak of the truths he imparted, under the incongruous figure of *flesh* and *blood;* or does he not obviously point to his body and blood as being literally connected with some great and momentous *fact*, some mighty truth, which, though not explained by him at the time, was nearly related to the eternal interests of men? The Jews understood him literally, and they murmured at his sayings. Or take it thus. What would you think of an individual, who, when lecturing on any branch of moral or religious truth, and magnifying the utility of his instructions, should instantly digress from his subject, and tell you that his body was meat and his blood drink for the mind? You would pronounce his meaning to be unintelligible, or you would mark his aberration from the propriety of language, and his violation of the conventional

use of terms. Had he spoken of his doctrine as the food of the mind, invigorating the intellects, maturing the moral character, and producing elevation and dignity of soul, you would have comprehended him; but when he represents the mind as nourished by material aliment, you instantly perceive that he has fallen into confusion, instead of employing an apt metaphor, and that with equal propriety he might represent moral and intellectual exercises as fit nutriment for the body. Where, then, is the wisdom, where the piety, of putting a construction on our Lord's language, which, on examination, appears to be unmeaning, or irrelevant, or absurd? One interpretation alone can, with regard to sound principles of scripture exposition, be affixed to these declarations of Christ. He had in view his sacrifice and its efficacy to save all true believers. The case is so simple as to defy laboured sophistry to explain it away, or learned ingenuity to supply new hypotheses, but such as are too extravagant to be for a moment tolerated.

2. The whole tenor of sacred writ supports and requires such an interpretation. It is confirmed by comparing it with the mode of expression used by our Lord on the affecting occasion

of his taking the last paschal feast with his disciples, a short time before he was betrayed. He was approaching the termination of his ministry, and spoke of the sacrificial nature of his death with less reserve than he deemed necessary while the hour of his departure was yet more distant. "And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body: and he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is *shed for many*, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS." (Matt. xxvi. 26.) Here our Lord manifestly speaks of the elements used at the sacramental board, as symbolical of his body and blood; and informs his disciples, in terms too explicit not to be understood, that the shedding of his blood was vicarious, for the remission of the sins of many. The current testimony of Scripture supports this view of the fact; and so explicit is the testimony of the Book of God to the Redeemer's mediatorial sacrifice, so numerous are the passages which directly or indirectly refer to it, so habitually do the inspired writers dwell on this subject with hallowed rapture or reverential awe, that the difficulty

when producing evidence on this point is not where to find it, but to select that which is most impressive from the voluminous mass of the sacred records.

When we read that "the *blood* of JESUS CHRIST his Son, cleanseth from *all sin*;" that "in HIM we have *redemption* through his *blood*, even the *forgiveness* of *sins*;" that "JESUS CHRIST was set forth to be a *propitiation* for *sins*, through faith in his *blood*;" that "CHRIST our *passover* was *sacrificed* FOR US;" and that "CHRIST *died* for our *sins* according to the Scripture;" when we are told in unqualified terms, that "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the *precious blood* of CHRIST, as of a *Lamb* without blemish and without spot;"—we cannot but observe in the general strain of these declarations, such an accordance with the language of our text as illustrates the discourse of our Lord, dispels the mysterious obscurity that invests it, and at once explains what he meant by his *flesh* and *blood*, by directing us to the great sacrifice, "the *Lamb* of GOD that taketh away the *sins* of the world." It is a most remarkable *coincidence*,

that *so many* sacrificial terms, with such various allusion and in such diversified forms, should be applied to the death of Christ—that they should be applied to *his* death *alone*, and not to any of the martyrs: nor is the fact to be explained on any other ground, than that all the ancient sacrifices which had a vicarious design, were, in various ways, types of the Saviour's death; and that "we are *sanctified* by the *offering* of the *body* of CHRIST, once for all." To repel the force of this argument, it is alleged by the adversaries of the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, that the application of sacrificial terms to the death of the Redeemer, are merely accommodations to Jewish prejudices, or figurative allusions to the Mosaic rites. But any intelligent reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews may perceive, that the writer of that book proceeds on a principle directly opposed to this, representing the sacrifice of Christ as real and proper, the sacrifices of the law as figurative and typical. "For the law, having a *shadow* of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect;" but "by one offering, HE hath perfected for ever them that are

sanctified." To represent, therefore, the Christian atonement, as a *figure* borrowed from Judaism, is to reverse the natural order of things, and to offer as direct a contradiction as is possible to the statements of the sacred writer. But there is another way of exposing the weakness of this objection. For supposing it granted that the sacrifice of Christ were but a figure—its architype to be sought in the Levitical law—what do we gain by this admission? We get over one supposed difficulty, only by stumbling upon another truly great and formidable. For upon this ground, what did the Mosaic sacrifices themselves signify? what was their understood use under that divine economy? Either they had an intrinsic efficacy—a moral virtue to expiate sin; or they were typical of something more glorious than themselves; or they were splendid trifles. That they had *no intrinsic value* is certain; "for the blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sin." If they were *symbolical*, what did they prefigure, if not the death of the Redeemer of the world? On any other supposition, so far as can be made to appear, they were but empty pageantry, distinguished indeed by their costliness, their pomp, their solemn and splendid

accompaniments—but without any correspondent utility. Without any significance proportioned to that immense ritual, and the severity of the law as a system of sacrificial observances, the Mosaic institution presents to the eye of reason only a stern but magnificent superstition. Thus we are brought to a serious dilemma—the reception of the sacrifice of Christ or the rejection of the Mosaic institutions. They stand or they fall together. Brethren, the fact of the atonement is not more firmly established upon the authority of the Scriptures, than it is in itself of great and undefinable importance. It is the corner-stone of the Christian fabric—the grand distinctive character of our religion—the foundation of the sinner's hope as the medium of his acceptance with God—the consolation of the penitent—the joy of the believer. On *earth* it is the solace and the refuge of the church of God, of so much moment to be kept ever in view, that the great Lord of his people has instituted an ordinance, in especial remembrance of his own death: in *heaven* it is the song of the redeemed, inspired by love, by gratitude, by the consciousness of owing to his mediation the felicities of eternal life. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

If in a world of error and of conflict, this, together with every capital doctrine of Christianity, has been an object of hostility, we have this ground of consolation, that in every age the impugners of the Evangelic faith have called forth the energies of equally able advocates—that the assumed superiority of skill in critical learning or in philosophic accuracy of latitudinarian writers, has been found, on investigation, too thin a veil to cover the dangerous tendency of their speculations—that their triumphs have been celebrated but by few beyond a narrow circle of ingenious men, whose habits of mind better qualify them to engage with adroitness in intellectual combats, than to embrace comprehensive views of the actual condition and moral necessities of a degenerate world—and that the fundamental truths of the gospel, far from sustaining eventual injury from the sportive or malignant efforts of the wisdom of this world, have been surrounded with new evidences, and presented with unimpaired attractions, so as to take a firmer hold upon the public mind : as the oak of the forest lives amidst savage winds, and strikes his roots deeper in the rocking of the storm.

II. The superlative worth of the blessings

procured by this vicarious sacrifice, is another consideration suggested by our Lord. In the figurative language of this discourse, these blessings are the bread of *life*, and the meat which endureth unto *everlasting life*. In other words, the everlasting happiness of the soul, which includes, as summed up in itself, every real, every needful, every possible good, which can enter into the well-being of man; so that in the emphatic expression of the divine Saviour—his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed! To apprehend in any due degree, the magnitude and extent of these blessings, so as to have awakened in your breasts that ardour of love and gratitude which they ought to inspire towards the Author of our salvation, it is absolutely necessary to advert to the deplorable condition of man as a sinner, and the insuperable obstacles which intervened between him and eternal life—obstacles which could only be removed by the substitution of an intercessory Redeemer.

1. There was guilt to be absolved and the curse to be abolished. The Scriptures conclude all men under sin. As violators of the divine law, they are subjected to the penalties by which that law is sanctioned and guarded—the loss of

conscious rectitude—the displeasure of God—the forfeiture of immortal life—and all the consequent degradation and misery which follow in the train of apostacy. The world is full of portentous evils, the fruits and the monuments of human transgression. All ages and generations have felt the consequences of the curse—every individual of the degenerate race tastes of the cup of bitterness—and in succession all are swept away by the hand of desolation, and death sits enthroned upon the ruins of the world. It is appointed unto all men once to die—and after that the judgment. Sin is an evil which fools mock at; but it is nevertheless an evil of such appalling malignity, that the Scriptures can describe it in no way more forcibly, than by speaking of its "*exceeding sinfulness*;" and before a sinful creature can be readmitted to the divine favour, he must be absolved on principles which shall not militate against the honour and integrity of the moral administration of God. Here occurs the most perplexing of all moral problems. How can God be just—and the justifier of the ungodly? That question is solved: infinite wisdom—infinite grace has met the difficulty in the vicarious sacrifice of the cross. "For all have

sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God—to declare, I say, at this time, *his righteousness*, that he may be *just*, and the *justifier* of him that believeth in Jesus." If it be asked, in what way the sacrifice and intercession of Christ secure the harmony of the divine perfections, and the integrity of the divine administration in the absolution and remission of sins; I confess my inability to frame a reply in all respects full and satisfactory to the question, and refer it to the deep things of God. The most profound and able theologians appear to me to have failed in their attempts to explain the question so perfectly, as that any one of their solutions may be implicitly relied on. It is enough that we have the testimony of God: and on that testimony, I receive implicitly the delightful and consolatory fact. So ample are the provisions made for the forgiveness of sins in the mediatorial work of Christ, so large and exuberant the manifestations of heavenly grace—that for the sake of

the Redeemer, not only are the transgressions of the sinner blotted out—not only is a full, an unlimited, a plenary pardon granted, but that pardon is enlarged, amplified, expanded into *justification*—and the penitent child of transgression, once the heir of condemnation and misery, is received without reserve into the divine favour—acknowledged as a member of the divine family—and crowned with the rewards of righteousness. Christ who was holy, for our sakes was treated as a sinner—and we who are sinful, are, for his sake, treated as though we were righteous: and "blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven!"

2. Another obstacle to the enjoyment of eternal life, was the moral depravity—the want of internal purity, spirituality, holiness—in a word, the loss of the divine image. That which constitutes the turpitude of actual transgression, is the evil heart of unbelief from which it springs. The stream of moral pollution can only flow from a fountain whose waters are defiled. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. It requires no profound philosophy—nothing but the exercise of the plainest understanding, to see that man, in the degeneracy of

his sinful nature, is disqualified for the pleasures and the sanctities of the heavenly state. There nothing defiled can obtain an entrance; for without holiness it is impossible to see or to please God. The individual whose heart is a stranger to the devout affections, whose life is devoted to sinful pursuits, so as to discover no habitual reverence of the Deity—no practical sense of moral obligation—no regard to the awful responsibilities which attach to every intelligent creature within the range of the divine government,—that individual cannot in the present world be an object of complacency to the infinite mind—the frown of heaven, with its withering curse, rests upon him; he is a stranger and an alien—and in the world to come he can be qualified to associate only with the devil and his angels, in the regions of revolt, of blasphemy, and of despair.

To the grace of absolution, therefore, must be added that of regeneration; and a mighty moral change must pass upon the spirits of those who are to inhabit the paradise of God. While, therefore, the gospel limits the application of the blood of Christ, as in the nature of things is necessary, to those who are renewed in the

spirit of their minds—since none but the regenerate can obtain admission into the celestial state—the author of our salvation vouchsafes to all believers the Spirit of grace, producing in them a new heart, and a right spirit. To him, as the head of influence under the evangelical economy, the dispensation of the Spirit is committed; and, if conscious of our degeneracy and pollution, we implore his sanctifying grace, he will empower us to vanquish the corruptions of our nature, rescue our affections from the thraldom of sense and sin, and, by restoring us to the holy image of God, qualify us for the possession of the inheritance of the saints in light. "For Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church; not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

To every well-constituted mind—to every one who has learned "to delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man;" the grace of regeneration must appear to hold a pre-eminent rank among the blessings of redemption. Not to say, that without it pardon would have been unavailing, since it would have left the sinner still a slave to corruption, and an alien from God—not

to say, that it would have been unworthy of the divine benignity, and not to be reconciled with the divine righteousness, to dispense forgiveness to men, so long as they continued morally "dead in trespasses and sins;"—the communication of the divine Spirit imparts to Christianity its most noble distinction as a restorative system, which, by liberating the passions from all unholy restraints, and correcting the moral maladies of the heart, prepares the way for the righteous employment of the intellectual and moral powers; emancipating reason from the fetters of prejudice, and replenishing the soul with light and love from on high, until it is filled with all the fulness of God. The soul, thus delivered from the bondage of corruption, is qualified to re-occupy its station amongst the holy intelligences, the fair and immortal minds, whose communion with the Deity has never been suspended by transgression. Bathed in the fountain of living waters, its maladies are healed, its defilements are removed, its energies are refreshed; the image of the Eternal, once obliterated, is now impressed upon all its renovated faculties; old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new; and thus, by the efficacy of the great sacrifice, first removing every obstacle on the part of the

divine righteousness, and then procuring for the sinner the regeneration of his soul, the gates of immortality are thrown open to the redeemed.

When we contemplate these mighty results, there will appear ineffable beauty and truth in the declaration of our Lord, whose glory appears most transcendent as the head of a moral economy framed for the restoration of a guilty and demoralized world. "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of *this* bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh—*my crucified humanity*—which I will give for *the life* of the world." When, indeed, we speak of the celestial kingdom, the blessedness of the saved, and an endless duration of happy existence, we touch upon subjects veiled in shades of solemn mystery, and placed by their undefinable grandeur beyond the reach of our present apprehension. But of their reality we are not the less assured, since to whatsoever conceivable or inconceivable extent the felicities of the redeemed may be carried, that illimitable perfection will not more than correspond with the value of "the precious blood of Christ," or the unsearchable riches of the love of God. "He that spared not his own Son, but

delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

III. Our Lord intimates—the efficacy of a genuine and practical faith in securing to his disciples the blessings of his vicarious sacrifice. When the Jews inquired by what means they might successfully labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, our Lord replied: "This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent." This was the meaning which our Lord intended to convey, when he spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood—words which, in their gross and literal acceptation, expressed an impossibility; but whose mystical or spiritual import, when explained, appears to be, faith in his redemption. Hence, in a subsequent part of this extraordinary discourse, our Lord adds, "It is *the spirit* that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are life:" thus intimating, that the proper acceptation of his words in their *spiritual* import, was that which would render them availing to everlasting life.

The nature and the efficacy of faith, is a question which yields in practical importance to none, since upon the due exercise of this grace, our

participation in the blessings of the gospel is expressly made to depend. Our justification is invariably ascribed to it; and under every dispensation it has been identified with real religion, constituting its very essence, and inseparable from its existence. The just shall live by faith; and without faith it is impossible to please God. No subject, however, has been more perplexed with difficulties, nor any more dangerously abused; while, as a consequence, the adversaries of the evangelical doctrine, taking advantage of its weak or inconsistent friends, have thrown upon it unmeasured obloquy, as being subversive of the interests of virtue and morality. This is the more surprising, since it seems improbable that a matter of immediate practical importance, interesting to the most unlettered of the followers of Christ, should require abstruseness of reasoning, or the aids of a recondite philosophy, to make it intelligible. In fact, to a simple mind, a humble heart, an unsophisticated soul, it presents no real difficulties. Nor would it have occasioned so many fruitless controversies, had not a narrow and technical theology usurped the place of that divine religion, which, rising above every species of metaphysical refinement, and spurning the

trammels of human system, addresses itself to the conscience and to the heart. There are questions in philosophy and in religion which the human intellect can neither solve nor reconcile. We are ignorant of the first principles, the universal truths, by which they might be explained, or into which they are resolvable; and, by the premature attempt to reduce every thing to system, while boundless regions in the universe of mind remain still unexplored, even the few truths we possess are perverted; and the majestic simplicity of the gospel being loaded with artificial distinctions, presents no reply to the urgent inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" but a perplexing riddle.

Many of the controversies respecting saving faith might have been spared, if reference were had to those illustrious examples which were furnished by the believers and saints of former dispensations. Nothing can be more obvious, than that faith, considered as a grace of the Spirit, or a religious principle of action, must be essentially the same under every divine economy. The faith of Abraham, of Moses, of Samuel, of David, and of the prophets, differs from that of Christians, not in its essential qualities, but only

in embracing a less or greater number of truths, or in viewing the same truths through a medium of less or greater obscurity. In spirit they must be essentially one and the same. Nor can any faith in Christ, nor any clear and comprehensive views of his mediatorial character, nor any reliance, however confident, in the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice, be deemed an unequivocal claim to an interest in his salvation, if it be unaccompanied by that state of the mind and the heart which constituted the faith by which the elders obtained a good report. It is impossible to prove by any induction of sacred testimonies, that the faithful who lived and died under the Mosaic or patriarchal dispensations, possessed any distinct conceptions of the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God. Obscure intimations and mystic types of the great deliverer were all they enjoyed, with "a dim religious light" shed upon futurity: and in the most sweet and tender of their devotional exercises we often discover the gloom of mysterious apprehension brooding upon their spirits, dreary perturbations of the soul, when meditating upon death and treading upon the dark confines of eternity, while their sole refuge consisted in an implicit reliance upon the obscure promises

of God. Still they exercised a faith which was counted to them for righteousness—a faith which justified and saved; and now they are before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Our business, therefore, is to ascertain the nature, the principles, the operation of their faith; and then to see to it, that there be something analogous or corresponding with it in our believing on the Son of God.

1. Their faith in God originated in a spiritual principle of sincere piety. They "believed God," because he is God. They received his testimony with unlimited confidence, on the ground of his truth and faithfulness, persuaded that he was worthy of their veneration, their love, their implicit reliance; and hence, with profound humility, they were prepared to honour his *whole* revealed will. Their faith, therefore, was the beautiful fruit of their regenerate nature. And the faith of the believer, under the Christian economy, is also described as being "the gift of God," since it is a fruit of the Spirit; and in the absence of that spiritual grace, which renews and sanctifies our moral faculties, it is not possible that the pride of intellect and the turbulence of passion should yield to the dictates of piety, and

thus become subject to the obedience of faith. A cold persuasion, indeed, of the truth of Christianity, or a speculative belief of its essential doctrines, may very possibly exist apart from religious principle and the devout affections. In this way the arch-fiend himself believes and trembles. But saving faith is the exercise of a mind under the ennobling influence of religious integrity. Hence its unreluctant submission to the whole discovered will of God. The same renunciation of self, the same yielding of the soul to the parental dominion of the Deity, which leads to the acceptable acknowledgment of one revealed fact, will prepare the mind for a similar adoption of whatever may appear to be the will of God.

This applies with all its force to our reception of the divine testimony respecting Christ. The *whole* of that testimony will be regarded with equal reverence. The Redeemer will be an object of faith, not more in one of his mediatorial offices, than in another; not more as the priest and the sacrifice, than as the prophetic teacher and sovereign Lord of the church. Nor can any statements be more unscriptural than those which limit the efficacy of saving faith to the one particular act

of embracing the Saviour in his vicarious sacrifice, or, as it is sometimes expressed, laying hold of the righteousness of Christ. Faith is frequently described by theological writers, as being simply the hand which is held out to receive the gift of justification through the righteousness of Christ. Such views are adopted through a jealous apprehension, lest some moral virtue should be assigned to faith; lest it should seem to partake of the nature of a *work;* and thus, assuming a meritorious character, detract from the grace of God, and divide with the Saviour the glory of our redemption. In all this there is great misconception. Not only does it exhibit this transcendent grace as exercising an influence much less potent and universal over the religious character than is assigned to it by the inspired writers; not only does it overlook the fact, that although the mediation of Christ is the meritorious ground of our justification, nevertheless the *faith itself* of the believer is that which is invariably spoken of in Scripture as that which is "*counted*," "*imputed*," "*reckoned*," to him for righteousness; but, moreover, it confounds the most obvious distinctions—the *principle* of faith as a divine grace, and *one* of its *particular acts;*

an act, indeed, of stupendous consequence, but still an act whose value, after all, is nullified—nay, the very performance of which, in any saving or evangelical sense, is impossible, apart from the gracious principle which gives to every act of religion its acceptableness with God. To this we may add, that the most exalted views we can form of the moral influence of faith, the most extensive domination we can assign to it as bringing the whole of revealed truth to bear upon our characters, instead of derogating from the work of Christ, serve to magnify it, since it is for his sake, and through the merits of his intercession, that the spirit of faith is vouchsafed to all believers.

2. The faith of ancient believers was distinguished by a simple trust in the divine promises, and the grace to which these promises related. Abraham the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, supplies an example of this simple reliance, so beautiful, so sublime, so perfect, that the apostolic writers hold it up to the Church of God as a pattern to all that shall believe; and the faithful of every age have mused upon it with reverence and humiliation, as displaying an almost inimitable act of absolute confidence in the

truth of God. "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that 'in Isaac shall thy seed be called,'—accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." Under the gracious economy of the gospel, believers have ample opportunity for this particular exercise of their faith. Here is manifested to their view, the divine Redeemer in all the plenitude of his saving power, and all the attractions of his ineffable love. Through the efficacy of his propitiation, through the prevalence of his intercession, the forgiveness of sins is granted in the most unlimited form, and to the chief of sinners, on the generous condition of their repenting and forsaking their sins, and throwing themselves with simple reliance on the merits of the crucified Saviour. To every one who thus comes to God, promises great and precious are addressed; and these promises, ratified by the blood of the cross, are pronounced to be inviolable—"Yea, and Amen, in Christ Jesus." Pardon, justification, adoption, the supply of the Spirit of grace, communion with God, the sanctified use

of the dispensations of Providence, all that can enrich the mind with ennobling thoughts, all that can sooth the heart with cheering consolations, are assured to the people of God. Their sins are blotted out, their souls are regenerated, the image and superscription of the Eternal is stamped upon them, and from amidst the gloomy desolations of sin and death, they are invited to calm their spirits with visions speedily to be realized, of glory, honour, and immortality. It is one distinguished province of faith—its more specific province, considered as *Christian* faith—to embrace these promises, fleeing to him who is the refuge set before us; "whom, having not seen, ye love. In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Another instance will close this enumeration.

3. The faith by which the primitive believers were justified, produced a practical and conscientious obedience to the commandments of God. It was the great antagonist principle by which they sustained a conflict with corruption, temptation, and sin, and overcame the world. It was embodied in holy deeds, and shed a beautiful moral influence over their lives,

which, amidst the frailties and infirmities incident to our fallen nature, reflected the glory of the Deity, demonstrating the existence within them of a divine and immortal principle. The inseparable connexion of saving faith with a renewed heart, rendered it morally impossible that they should not thus "walk with God." Faith is still to be ascertained by its fruits. While the sacred writers insist on the sacrifice and intercession of Christ as the meritorious cause of salvation, with equal clearness they affirm the necessity of good works—not simply as a consequence of right believing—not simply as the proof, the demonstration, the justification of faith itself, by establishing its sincerity,—but as being so entirely identified with faith, so inseparable from its existence as a saving principle, that apart from them, faith has no power to justify; and, with the same propriety, we may be said to be justified by *faith*, or by the *works* which constitute the obedience of faith. What, on this point, is the testimony of the Spirit of God? "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect·

And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see, then, how that by *works* a man is justified, and not by faith only." Between this statement of St. James, and that of St. Paul, that "a man is justified by *faith alone*, without works of law," there is no contradiction, no discrepancy; since the works which Paul excludes from our justification, are not those which flow from saving faith, but such works of law, as unregenerate man attempts in his own strength, and on self-righteous principles, as a ground of justification with God, and, through the sinfulness of his nature, is unable to perform. The two apostles do not speak of two different kinds of faith, nor of two different kinds of justification, the one of a sinner, the other of a believer. There can be but one faith that justifies, and it is that which, in the expressive language of the New Testament, "purifies the heart," and "worketh by love"—that particular act of faith which embraces the Saviour in his sacrificial character, leaving in its full force every previously existing obligation to moral righteousness, while it supplies additional motives of the

most cogent and generous nature, "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

To this faith is the promise of everlasting life given, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,—this is to eat the flesh and to drink the blood of the Son of God.

Since the view which has now been taken of justifying faith differs from some more popular statements, it may not be superfluous to mention some of its advantages :—

1. It does not question the propriety of the philosophic definition of faith, as simple belief, credit given to testimony, or conviction produced by evidence. It supposes all along such rational persuasion to be included in the faith of God's elect, while it denies that such belief apart from a pious disposition, will avail to salvation. It is not therefore at variance with any acknowledged principle of sound philosophy, between which and religion there can never be found the slightest collision.

2. It accords entirely with the grace of the gospel, which it confirms and establishes, inasmuch as it represents saving faith itself, with all its moral excellence, as a fruit of the divine Spirit, influencing the hearts of the regene-

rate, and consequently a blessing of the covenant of redemption, procured by the sacrifice and intercession of Christ. It is both bestowed as a *consequence* of the work of Christ, of which the bestowment of spiritual grace is one of the most valuable results, and it is received as a ground of justification exclusively *for his sake*. Although, therefore, it is a *work*, and expressly so denominated by our Lord—the most excellent of all good works, as containing the germinant principle of every kind and degree of moral goodness, —it does not militate against the merit of that sacrifice, to which, as the procuring cause, it owes its existence, and in virtue of whose efficacy it is constituted and accepted as a ground of justification. As the most exalted of the blessings of redemption, it reflects immeasurable glory on that sacrifice.

3. By regarding saving faith as consisting rather in a holy principle, inducing a regard to the entire will and testimony of God, than in one particular act of reliance or trust, it secures all the great interests of holiness, without interfering with that reliance, or derogating from the grace which is the object of the believer's confidence. Thus it harmonizes with the genius of Christian-

ity as a restorative system which secures to God the rights of his moral government, by qualifying the faithful to perform his will; at the same time, demolishing the Antinomian doctrine as a pestilent corruption of the truth, spurious in its origin, and dangerous in its consequences; a doctrine which could never have found advocates in the Christian church, but for anti-scriptural views of faith. In this respect it is deeply to be lamented, that Martin Luther, the magnanimous apostle of the Reformation,—when, taking his stand against the popish doctrine of merit, he affirmed that the doctrine of justification by faith, was the criterion of a standing or a falling church,—did not exercise more discrimination in his expositions of that doctrine. Impelled by his generous and indignant hostility to the pharisaic corruptions of the Roman church, and, perhaps, as the advocate of the liberties of the Christian world, so absorbed in the controversies of the time, as to have little leisure for reviewing and correcting his sentiments, in the progress of his arduous career, he appears to have embraced notions respecting faith, almost as discordant with those of the Bible, as they were in extreme opposition to

those of Popery. The influence of his venerable authority has been felt ever since the Reformation; and his notions of faith have been productive of consequences, from which his own great and holy mind would have revolted with disgust. Had it not been that the *grace* and *spirit* of faith have counteracted, in the minds of multitudes of the faithful, the natural tendency of *erroneous views* of faith, the fearful tide of Antinomianism would have swoln to a deluge, before which all practical religion would have been swept away. As it is, the moral sense has lost much of its delicacy, and the tone of moral feeling has been prodigiously impaired, even where there has been no disposition to embrace the Antinomian theory of justification. It is true that the doctrine of the apostles may be, and was, early abused to purposes of sin; but it was abused only by being corrupted, and instead therefore of supplying a presumptive argument in favour of the more popular doctrine of the present day, there is the greater reason for retracing our steps, and "contending for the faith once delivered to the saints."

4. It does more to reconcile and harmonize the various representations of the word of God,

than any other system. It has been felt, for instance, as a difficulty, that believers under the Christian dispensation are admonished to exercise an implicit trust in the mediation of Christ, such as was not possible before the full disclosures of the evangelic revelation, and without which, consequently, the ancient church was justified and saved. Here we are supplied with a principle which solves the difficulty, without doing violence to truth, or distorting plain facts. While it describes the faith of Abraham, and the faith of Paul, as alike accepted only through the merits of the divine intercessor, it affirms that the essence of justifying faith consists, not in the reception of any one particular truth, but in the disposition to receive *all* truth on the testimony of God, and that the necessity therefore of simple trust in the mediatorial sacrifice, under the present economy, does not originate in this, that the knowledge and reception of the great atonement enters into the essence of saving faith, as such, but that it is the part of true piety, under every dispensation, to yield a practical assent to the whole revealed will of God. Hence it does not require, that, with *some*, we should attribute to ancient believers clearer

apprehensions of the work of Christ than facts will warrant—nor to *others* does it concede that we are permitted to attach little importance to a distinct and spiritual recognition of the intercessory work of the Redeemer in these latter days. The mystery hidden from ages and generations, and now made manifest, demands a reception corresponding with its stupendous magnitude and immeasurable grace. The supposed discordance between Paul and James is also cleared away, and the attempt to show that they were writing on different subjects is seen to be altogether superfluous. Between these inspired men there was a perfect agreement. The difficulty is, to make them both accord, not with each other, but with the narrow theories which have been substituted for the faith of the gospel. Truth is discovered by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" and of two several representations of any revealed truth, that may be presumed to approximate nearest to the divine mind, which accords with the most numerous phenomena of the word of God.

5. It demolishes the objection, sometimes advanced, that making faith the condition of sal-

vation, is a mere arbitrary appointment, neither consistent with the eternal obligations of morality, nor with the constitution of the human mind, which cannot believe at pleasure, apart from rational conviction; and that a man is not to be condemned for not receiving facts, with the evidence of which he is not satisfied, or which may not approve themselves to the particular construction and habits of his mind. Such objections may apply to erroneous and contracted notions of faith; they are irrelevant to the Scripture doctrine. Here it is seen that saving faith being identified with religious principle, and embracing, so far as it is apprehended, the whole of revealed truth, is, in the nature of things, morally necessary; and that the system which gives to it a prominent importance, pronouncing it to be indispensable, is essentially a system of piety, of virtue, of universal goodness. In a word, far from being arbitrary, it is impossible to conceive that any system that should exclude this, as a condition of the divine mercy, could be worthy of the righteous mind of Deity, or adapted to the circumstances of man.

The consequence follows, that *such rejection*

of revealed truth as the Bible proscribes, cannot be resolved into an innocent act of the mind, at worst, led astray by misconception and unavoidable error. The spirit of unbelief, as opposed to that of faith, in the very genius of irreligion, of disobedience, of impious revolt, of apostacy from God. As such, and not simply as an aberration of the intellect, nobly asserting its freedom, but unfortunately led astray, it is denounced with the utmost severity of condemnation by the Saviour and judge of mankind. It is an object of divine displeasure, not as error, but as sin—not as a failure of the understanding, but as a defection of the heart. The significant terms, therefore, in which the Scriptures express the acceptableness of faith as the condition of the divine favour, and the stern indignation of Heaven against unbelief, resolves itself into the holiness of the divine administration, which provides for the reward of the faithful servants of God, and dooms to perdition the unrelenting adversary of truth and righteousness. If from this view the consolatory inference must arise, that involuntary and unavoidable errors, such as are merely mental, will not be imputed to moral turpitude by the Searcher of hearts—

if the decisions of the final judgment will turn, after all, upon the hidden motives and affections of the soul, known only to the unerring mind of the Eternal; still the responsibility attached to every individual is great and awful, since, of the possibility of dishonouring truth from a criminal antipathy to its holy requirements, there cannot be a doubt, nor will it fail to be visited by the unequivocal marks of the divine indignation. It is the forfeiture of grace, and portends the fearful looking for of judgment. The monitory example is before all the world. Israel is fallen.—Ages have rolled away—generation has followed generation, in long succession, to the dust—the face of the world is changed—time is hastening on to the final consummation; still, Israel is fallen, and the judgments of Heaven continue to respond to that direful imprecation, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!" "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

DISCOURSE III.

ON CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE.

1 John iii. 19.

And hereby we know, that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

The truth of Christianity, and the awfulness of its revelations, are matters of deep personal concern to every individual, since there is no man who will not either partake of the blessings which it assures to the faithful, or endure the punishments which it denounces upon the guilty. No inquiries, therefore, are so momentous as those which relate to the proofs and evidences of an interest in the salvation of Jesus Christ. These are not unprofitable speculations; they involve great practical results, having a direct and mani-

fest bearing upon all that is most important to our welfare, upon our present hope, our tranquillity in death, and our immortal destinies. Nor is it possible, when we consider how much is at stake, how vastly different will be the future condition of those who are *one with Christ*, and those who have *no part in him*— not to contemplate, as exceedingly affecting and portentous, the total insensibility of some to the magnitude of these inquiries, and the easy credulity of others, who indulge in dreams of security, while destitute of any reason of the hope that is in them that will bear honest examination. Among the latter are to be ranked the victims of a spurious assurance, who, reversing the true order of things, in their haste to obtain peace of conscience, rely upon the strength of their confidence as the evidence of their safety, instead of ascertaining upon what grounds that confidence is built; a procedure the most unwise, and involving the utmost extravagance of fanaticism, since it confounds presumption with faith, substitutes a blind persuasion for reasonable conviction, overlooks the real and appropriate evidences by which alone this question can be solved, and puts in their stead the work-

ings of a sanguine mind—a mind which can arrive at conclusions without premises, and build a lofty structure where there is no foundation. The value of assurance, it is manifest, depends not on its pertinacity, but on the nature of the grounds on which it rests; and *these grounds*, and not the assurance built upon them, constitute the *evidences* of our being in a state of grace. So far is this assurance from being itself the essence of faith and of piety, and consequently the distinctive character of the true believer, that the self-deceiver may attain to it, while the truly sincere may be unable to realize an indubitable interest in the grace of Heaven—their profound humility, their diffidence, or their partial knowledge of the scheme of redemption, disqualifying them for the sublimer satisfactions of the divine life. To make assurance, therefore, under any circumstances, and especially apart from scriptural grounds of hope, the evidence of salvation is the delusion of him that leans upon a reed, or attempts to raise upon a quicksand a column for immortality. Nor can we but regard this delusion as one of the wiles of the great adversary for the more effectual destruction of souls. Let him, therefore, that thinketh he

standeth, take heed lest he fall. There is an entirely different class of persons, by whom are entertained notions vague, undefined, and of injurious tendency, respecting the Scripture doctrine of personal assurance — persons who are in possession of the principles of vital religion, and who consequently have the genuine witness of the Spirit, or, at least, all the substantial evidences of an interest in the grace of Christ, which the divine Spirit is wont to honour with his corroborating testimony: these, however, they have been taught to regard as doubtful or insufficient without assurance; that assurance they are instructed, by their spiritual guides, to obtain by looking exclusively to the finished work of the Redeemer, to the amplitude of provision made in the Christian salvation, whose riches of grace are sufficient to meet every want and every desire of the sincere believer, while his views are directed simply and alone to the fulness of Christ. They do not perceive that there is a fallacy wrapped up in these representations, and that two things, perfectly distinct in themselves, are confounded together, so as to occasion serious perplexity to any mind unused to the detection of sophistry, unskilled

in accuracy of terms and precision of thought. It is *one thing*, to contemplate with veneration and delight the Saviour of the world in the plenitude of his power and grace—to apprehend the nature of the evangelic economy and the majesty of its stupendous designs; and it is quite *another thing* to ascertain our own individual interest in the love of God. These are conclusions distinct from each other, and to be arrived at by very different processes of mind. The grace of Christ and his all-sufficiency to save, is a fact which we receive as true upon the simple testimony of the Bible. Our individual interest, on the contrary, in that grace and all-sufficiency, supposing it to be also a fact, is no where revealed; it can only be inferred from the genuineness of our faith, and the sincerity of this faith is to be tried by our works, that is, by the habitual course and practice of our lives. The grace of Christ, and the promise of acceptance to every one that believeth on him, constitute our warrant to come to God through his mediation: but it is equally obvious, that they afford no evidence whatsoever, that we have in reality thus come in the exercise of evangelical faith and repentance. To urge, there-

fore, a timid and humble believer to seek assurance by simple views of the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer, is to misapply a great revealed fact, by separating it from its necessary connexions and relations, and then employing it as an argument in proof of what it never was designed alone to prove, nor could by any possibility be made to prove. The Bible does not more clearly propound to us the perfection of the Saviour and his finished work of grace and atonement, than it insists on a practical and holy faith, as the condition of an interest in his salvation ; and to secure, therefore, an assurance of our personal redemption, a persuasion of the genuineness of our faith is not less indispensable than a conviction of the power of Christ to save. This can be ascertained only by a process of moral reasoning, founded upon a course of Christian experience, and the habitual consistency of a religious life ; and these, sanctioned and enforced by the divine Spirit, bearing a corresponding testimony with our own spirits, that we are children of God. With this statement entirely accords the language of the apostle in the connexion of our text. He enforces the great practical duties of religion, some of which

he specifies, laying particular stress on imitation of the love of God; and this he does by the consideration, that "hereby," that is, by the faithful discharge of these duties, "we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

Just conceptions of this subject are particularly to be desired, in order to guard the sanguine against the illusions of deceitful hope, and to rescue the fearful from the pressure of needless despair. And to arrive at the truth in this instance, we must search the Scriptures, whose decisions are final, founded on principles of righteousness, which will retain their unalterable majesty when the false confidence of the presumptuous shall have subsided into despondency, and the trembling anxieties of the "poor in spirit" are exchanged for joys unspeakable and full of glory.

I. That the assurance of a personal interest in Christ is attainable, may be inferred from a variety of considerations. The testimony of the Bible to this fact is definite, various, and incontrovertible on any sound principles of interpretation. The apostle Paul, when speaking generally of believers, affirms, "Ye have not received

the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." And, in reference to himself immediately, he declares, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And John, besides the declaration of our text, pronounces elsewhere, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

These are selections from a variety of testimonies to the same purpose. In addition to such as these, which may be called *direct*, there are many classes of indirect and collateral testimonies, consisting in the prayers, the thanksgivings, the religious joy, and the fair glimpses—the glowing anticipations of immortality to be met with in the devout exercises of the faithful. These constitute a very extensive portion of the devotional parts of the Bible. Nor is it easy to explain the confidence expressed by the righteous servants of God in the providence and grace of their heavenly Father; the calm reliance with which they yield themselves to his will in all things; their firm anticipation even amidst weak-

ness and sorrow of ultimate deliverance from every species of calamity; and their hopes of transcendent happiness hereafter, when sin and death are doomed to eternal abolition. It is not easy to explain these facts on any other principle, than that they felt a general assurance of an interest in the love of God, and upon the strength of that assurance, were enabled to realize the consolations of hope and the joy of faith, in the endurance of affliction, amid the darkness of Providence, under the mysteries that confound the human understanding, and the terrors that appal the human heart. From the almost uniform experience of these consolations by the faithful, who, in proportion to their progress in religion and eminent attainments in the divine life, have been found to partake of the peace of God, it is just to infer, that in the truths of revealed religion, in their genuine operation upon the mind and the heart, when received by faith, there is something to create and to cherish *a sense of personal interest* in the grace of God: otherwise, all such expressions of confidence, of hope, and of spiritual triumph, by a sinful creature, must be resolved into ignorant presumption, or profane familiarity with the name

and perfections of the Eternal; a conclusion utterly at variance with the character of these holy individuals, who are held up to our imitation, that we may be followers of their faith and patience. It is not the language of philosophic speculation, or of wild fanaticism, or of complacent ignorance, or of Antinomian insobriety. No! it is the song of Zion, sung with the melody of the heart, and proceeding from hallowed lips, touched by the finger of Heaven. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, in thy name shall they rejoice all the day." If, from the examples and illustrations contained in the Bible, we turn to the history of saints and martyrs, and holy men of God, who, in every subsequent age of the church, have walked by faith, reflecting the light of truth and goodness upon a demoralized world, we shall find them generally in possession of this calm assurance, mingled oftentimes with doubts and fears, so that, while buffeting with the floods

of tribulation, they have exclaimed, "Thy waves and thy billows have gone over me!" but still sustained by a predominant and indestructible persuasion, that at last all would be well; and, meanwhile, that amidst the menacing dangers of life, their interests were secure for time and for ever! This has been the case with the most devout, the most enlightened of believers, men the most free from the misguiding influence of an untutored imagination—men who have eminently walked with God, in a conscientious adherence to truth, and a uniform discharge of the moral duties. And it would be unreasonable to suppose such persons left, in this particular instance, to a dangerous, though delightful illusion. It is more consistent with every sound view of the moral government of God to conclude, that such assurance was founded on their principles, connected with their piety, sprung out of their habitual conformity to the divine will, and was the natural reward affixed by God himself to a life devoted to rectitude, and devotion, and heaven. From the confidence of an ungodly man, it is obvious that nothing can be inferred but his presumption; but the tranquil assurance of the righteous leads to the persuasion, that it is

not of doubtful origin, but rather "*the peace of God*, which passeth all understanding."

To these considerations we may add, that without the possibility of arriving at some degree of personal assurance, it would not be practicable for the believer to *appropriate* to himself, so as to taste their sweetness, and experience their consolations, the *promises* of the Bible. These promises are declared to be "great and precious;" but they are conditional. They apply exclusively to certain descriptions of character. No man can solace himself with these waters of the river of life, but he who has a scriptural authority for making them his own. For instance, the promises of God that he will *hear* and *honour* PRAYER, are fraught with ineffable consolations. But to *whom* are they addressed? "The eyes of the Lord are upon the *righteous*, and his ears are open unto their cry." "The *righteous* cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments*, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight." Such promises, with their riches of grace, none can realize but those who can indulge a scriptural persuasion

that they are numbered with the righteous, and that they are living in a manner pleasing to God. And if it were impossible that any should attain to this hope, the promises would in vain have been left on record for the perpetual encouragement of the people of God.

To conclude this argument. It is a consideration of weight, that without the assurance of ultimate success, without feelings and anticipations resembling those of the apostle, when he could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to his hands," there would be wanting one of the most animating encouragements to pursue the course of virtue, and to persevere in the divine life. The declension of hope, the prevalence of despondency, would enervate and paralyze the soul. This is certain, from the known and acknowledged principles of human nature. The want of confidence has been fatal to many a noble or arduous enterprize; the possession of it has sometimes given success to the most hopeless projects. Confidence arms the soul with calm resolution and irresistible energy. Hope serenely triumphs amidst appalling dangers; it has not seldom restored and recovered every

thing, when all *but itself* was lost. The Bible is constructed with exact regard to the intellectual and moral constitution of man; and, therefore, to invigorate the confidence, and sustain the hope of the believer with assurance of final success, the voice of the Most High declares, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!" Thus it appears that assurance is a possible attainment. It is placed beyond controversy by the direct and indirect testimony of the Bible; by the experience of the most intelligent and holy members of the church of God; by the consideration, that without it none could appropriate the promises of grace; and by the moral necessity of so powerful an incentive to insure perseverance in the ways of righteousness.

II. We proceed to inquire to what extent this assurance may be attained. The question is not, to what extent the assurance of fanaticism, or the confidence of presumption may proceed; to this no limits can be assigned; for who shall measure the follies and delusions of ignorant men? The question is, to what extent a reasonable and scriptural assurance of an interest in Christ may be enjoyed by the enlightened and conscientious believer? To the law and to the

testimony! In the New Testament, the word rendered in the common version, perhaps not with entire accuracy, "much assurance," or "full assurance," occurs four times; and to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the question, it will be proper to direct our attention to each of these passages.

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in *much assurance;* as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." —(1 Thes. i. 5.) In this instance, the "much" or "full assurance," was a powerful persuasion of the excellence and truth of Christianity, produced by the miraculous demonstrations which attended its promulgation, and confirmed by the disinterested and unimpeachable conduct of the apostles. It refers, therefore, not to a particular assurance of an individual interest in its blessings, but to the general belief of its supernatural origin and divine authority.

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the *full assurance* of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."—(Coloss. ii. 2.) This

language expresses the earnest desire of the apostle, that the Colossians might possess so enlarged and intelligent an apprehension of evangelical truth, that, under the influence of deep conviction, they might be induced to acknowledge, by an unwavering profession, their faith in the mysteries of the gospel. Here, again, the "full assurance" has reference to the truth of Christianity in general, and to its peculiar mysteries; not to any persuasion of a personal interest in its blessings.

"And having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in *full assurance* of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."—(Hebrews x. 21, 22.) Here the "full assurance of faith" evidently means a firm and consolatory persuasion of the priesthood of Christ, with a correspondent reliance upon the value of his sacrifice, and the prevalence of his intercession; which is quite another thing from an absolute belief of our own particular interest in his atoning blood, as a necessary qualification for approaching the throne of grace. The argument of the apostle is not that we should boldly enter the holy of holies, from an

assurance that we are actually and beyond controversy already numbered with the redeemed; but from a satisfactory persuasion that we have an Intercessor, whose merits we can earnestly plead, while as sinners we are imploring forgiveness before the majesty of a righteous God. Besides, that such an interpretation is required by the entire complexion of this passage, it is obvious to remark, that in no scriptural—in no evangelical sense, can our own spiritual state, as believers, our personal interest in the covenant of grace, be an object of *faith*, in the same way in which Christ is an object of faith. What is faith, but belief founded upon testimony? What is *Christian* faith, but a practical belief of the testimony of the Gospel, respecting Christ? But that gospel nowhere testifies to the particular case of any individual Christian. It records not the names of the faithful who are enrolled in the book of life. It only announces the conditions on which any man, or every man, may be saved. The persuasion, therefore, of my own salvation, is no part of Christian faith, since it is not a belief of any thing that is written in the word of God. It may follow as an inference satisfactory to my own mind, since my faith in

Christ, being attended by evidences of regeneration, may justify the conclusion that I am a member of his mystical body. But still it is only a consequence of my believing, a happy and delightful result of my acceptance of Christ as my Redeemer. There is still no direct, no palpable,—no recorded testimony to my salvation. In reference to what *is* revealed, as is the priesthood of Christ, we may, and we ought, to exercise "a full assurance of faith." In reference to what is *not* revealed, as for instance the actual acceptance with God of any individual in particular, we may have an assurance, a persuasion satisfactory and full of consolation; but it cannot be "the full assurance of *faith*." It wants the absolute and incontrovertible certainty of a miraculous testimony from God.

It only remains for us to proceed to the fourth, and only other passage, in which "full assurance" occurs in the New Testament.

"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the *full assurance* of HOPE unto the end." (Heb. vi. 11.) As the assurance of *faith*, in the preceding passage, had reference to the reality and efficiency of the priesthood of Christ; so, the assurance of *hope*,

in this place, as clearly relates to the actual and personal condition, the final salvation of the redeemed. This is the only instance in which "full assurance" is used in relation to the personal state of believers; and this "*full assurance of* HOPE" is, I apprehend, the utmost that is attainable on this momentous concern by them, however absolute their faith in Christ, however bright and clear their evidences of a state of grace. The Christian must arrive at the persuasion of his personal interest in Christ by a process of moral reasoning, distinct from that evidence which proves to him the power and the grace of the Redeemer. Moral reasoning admits of *degrees* of persuasion, from a doubtful assent to powerful conviction. And amid so many examples of human infirmity and exposures of self-deception as constantly occur, hope seems to be the summit of our attainments, until the great ordeal is passed, and we enter into the joy of our Lord. Allow me to quote in this place, as peculiarly appropriate, the words of Owen, who says, in his exposition of this verse:—"Hope hath its degrees, as faith hath also. There is a weak or a little faith, and a strong or great faith: so

there is an imperfect and a more perfect hope. This 'full assurance' is not of the nature or essence of it, but an especial degree of it in its improvement. A weak, imperfect hope, will give but weak and imperfect relief under trouble; but that which rises up unto the '*full assurance*' will complete our relief. Wherefore as hope *itself* is necessary, so is *this degree* of it, especially where trials do abound. Yet neither is hope in this degree absolute, or absolutely perfect. Our minds in this world are not capable of such a degree of *assurance* in spiritual things, as to free us from assaults to the contrary, and impressions of fear sometimes from these assaults. But there is such a degree attainable as is always victorious, which will give the soul peace at all times, and sometimes fill it with joy. This therefore is the assurance of hope here intended." No man was more skilled than Owen in tracing the varied influences of religion upon the mind and the heart; and fortified by this great authority, by whom it is pronounced that "faith respects the promise—hope, the thing promised," I feel persuaded that we are not far from the scriptural representation of the subject, when we affirm that the "full assurance of HOPE" is the

utmost to be attained in regard to our individual acceptance with God—and that this is a measure of assurance to which only the most distinguished piety can reasonably expect to rise.

In further confirmation of this view of the subject, it may be remarked, that it accords with the present condition of man, placed under a moral administration, and subjected to responsibility as a probationer for immortal happiness. That such *is* the economy under which the human race exists, the most eminent theologians have agreed to maintain. Whatever metaphysical difficulties may encumber the doctrines of liberty and probation, every argument drawn from moral considerations is in their favour; nor does it appear possible to hold an opposite opinion, without admitting consequences irreconcileable with the acknowledged principles of the divine government, subversive of moral agency and human responsibility, and leading directly to a system of absolute fatalism, which leaves but one great agent in the universe, and makes all created intelligences the passive executors of his will. With a state of probation, such as actually exists, the persuasion of the absolute certainty of salvation would ill agree. It would

change the aspect of human life as a course of discipline for the formation of character. Nor would it admit of a fair trial of men's principles, since there would be no opportunity for the exercise of the more exalted and magnanimous virtues; self-denial in the control and subordination of the passions—resolute disregard of danger at the call of duty—unshaken trust in God amid the conflicts of temptation, and the revolutions of the world—and the sacrifice of present interest or pleasure on the sublime principle of pleasing God and living for eternity;—all this would be superseded, or in a great degree rendered impossible, if the individual, at the commencement of his religious life, had assigned to him the indelible and unconditional mark of eventual salvation. But with a probationary state, hope is altogether consistent, and every way calculated to subserve its momentous designs, by keeping alive expectation without relaxing vigilance; by holding out every incentive to confident anticipations of glory, honour, and immortality, short of that fixed and unalterable feeling of certainty, which might paralyze the energies of the soul, by inducing the persuasion that success was independent of endeavour, and

that without the conflict the victory and the triumph might be won.

It accords not more with a state of probation, than with the current admonitions and exhortations of the word of God. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." These admonitory cautions and hortatory addresses amount to sufficient proof, that although to God it is not unknown who will at last be numbered with the saved, they "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" it has not appeared fit to his infinite wisdom, to reveal it indiscriminately and directly to the individuals themselves, who are the heirs of his glory. On the contrary, it ap-

pears to be part of his scheme of moral administration, that, amongst other means, their salvation shall be effected by their being kept in some degree of awful suspense—their future happiness being made to rest conditionally on the sincerity of their faith, the uniformity of their obedience, and their victorious perseverance in the truth, until " mortality shall be swallowed up of life."

In relation to the *facts* and *promises* of the evangelical economy, there may be a full assurance of *faith*; but with regard to the believer's own interest in these facts and promises, there can only be a full assurance of HOPE. This is an important distinction. And instead of repining that he cannot ascend to a loftier eminence of spiritual bliss in the present world, the most eminent of the faithful servants of God will have ample ground of thankfulness, if he possess in its fulness, that hope, which is " an anchor within the veil, both sure and stedfast."

III. It remains for us to ascertain, under what circumstances this " full assurance of hope" may be realized by the faithful. From the statements already made, it appears, that it is not the happiness of every Christian to enjoy it; and the form of expression adopted by the author of the

Epistle to the Hebrews, clearly implies, that it was an attainment, like all others of great value, to be secured only by great and correspondent efforts, sustained by divine grace, and crowned with the divine blessing. "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." In this remarkable passage, no encouragement is held out to the young convert, in the noviciate of his religious life, to expect the attainment of assurance, as an immediate and necessary consequence of his faith in Christ. That faith, indeed, must form the deep and broad and unchangeable foundation of his hope and confidence, since without a general persuasion of the mercy of God, and deep conviction of his readiness to save all who approach him in his own appointed way, no human being could indulge a substantial hope. The exercise of this faith, nevertheless, does not involve, as its inseparable attendant, the full assurance of an interest in the Saviour; and the passage we have quoted intimates that this is to be arrived at by a probationary course of action and of suffering, by a resolute adherence to the example of those who have lived a life of

faith, patiently endured delays, temptations, and afflictions, and diligently attended to the discharge of moral duties and the cultivation of the means of grace. Such is the order of things from which a wise and reasonable man would expect assurance to be produced; and with this natural procedure, the representations of the Bible exactly correspond. That infallible word teaches us to put a *Christian life* in the first place, and full assurance as the consequence—not full assurance as the cause, and a Christian life as the effect. Upon this principle the admonitions and advices proceed, which are addressed to the faithful. "And, besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity;—give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." To illustrate this more fully, I remark,

1. That to live thus, under the habitual influence of holy principles, making the will of God the rule of Christian obedience, cannot fail in process of time to beget in the mind of a good man a consciousness of sincerity, and consequently

a persuasion that the grace of God has really maintained a spiritual dominion over his heart. For no man can walk with sustained integrity amidst the varied temptations of life, but as he is replenished by communications of grace, and armed for the conflict by the energies of Heaven. And therefore, " beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

2. It is under these circumstances that we look for the inward testimony or witness of the Holy Spirit, confirming and sealing to the believer the evidences of his integrity, helping him to realize the blessedness of the man who is justified by faith and delivered from condemnation ; and by his mysterious, but mighty agency, disposing the heart calmly and sweetly to yield itself up to the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Any other view would be unworthy of the sanctity and majesty of the eternal Spirit. The testimony he gives must be intelligent and rational. He cannot be supposed to bear witness to his own antecedent work of grace, where no moral, no spiritual, no holy manifestations of that work are discernible to the Christian himself, or to the church of God.

If "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," it is implied, that we were such before his testimony was given, that we had manifested ourselves to be "followers of God as dear children," nor would he impart assurance but in connexion with a life of indisputable piety. "To expect his comforts," says the apostolic Baxter, "without in any measure discerning his graces, which alone can prove our right to the blessings of the promise, is to expect that he should comfort a rational creature, not as rational, but cause him to rejoice he knoweth not why. And that he should make no use of faith to our comfort—but faith resteth understandingly upon the promise, and expecteth the performance of it, to those that it is made to, and not to others."

Clear apprehensions of this momentous but generally misunderstood subject, would prevent much unhappy delusion, and calm many visionary alarms. The want of such knowledge will account for the instability of those joys, the mutations of feeling and fluctuations of hope, which are often seen in the young convert to religion. The mere excitement of new and impressive views of divine truth, conjoined with the joyous

hilarity and sanguine temperament of the youthful mind, is often mistaken for the assurance of salvation sealed by the Holy Spirit—an assurance reserved, as we have shown, by the righteous dispenser of grace, to reward and honour, at a very different stage of the divine life, those who have given proof of their fidelity by bearing the heat and burden of the day. Hence the depressions incident to the animal spirits, or the collisions which afterwards take place with the world and its temptations, are misinterpreted as special withdrawments and sovereign hidings of the light of the divine countenance. In all this there is much of ignorant delusion. For where the witness of the Spirit had not been given to the amount of assurance, it could not be withdrawn to that amount; not to mention the want of reverence in the conception, that the Spirit of the living God should act a part so capricious, as to resemble rather the sportive resentments of children than the procedures of infinite wisdom.

Hence also it is easy to explain, why at a more advanced and experienced stage of the divine life, Christians of sound faith arrive at a more tranquil and invariable state of mind than in the days of their early piety. With fewer

fluctuations of hope and of fear—with less of joyous exultation of the heart, but with a sedate mind more habitually governed by great principles than subjected to doubtful frames and feelings, they peacefully resign themselves to the will of God; duty, become habitual, is now performed with cheerful acquiescence; afflictions are borne with meek resignation of spirit, as salutary discipline to purify the soul; and the stream of temptation passes harmlessly by, while they repose in fixed serenity upon the rock of ages, and listen to the murmur of the tide which leaves them untouched and uncontaminated by its turbulent waters. A deep consciousness has been produced by the experience of life, that amidst all the infirmities of nature, grace has carried them triumphantly through; and the Spirit of the Eternal, sanctioning this delightful persuasion, whispers within them, that they are indeed children of God, and heirs of the promises. By his gracious influence, they are brought more habitually, and, so to speak, sensibly into contact with the realities of the eternal world, until, having overcome all fearful anticipations of the hour of death, they seem to feel, even on this side the grave, the influence of the

beatific vision, and the ineffable blessedness of the saved.

Such I apprehend to be the ordinary course of things under the divine administration. Far be it from us to suppose, that there are not exceptions to this general rule. In the kingdom of grace, as in that of nature, the Sovereign of the universe alters and varies his modes of procedure on extraordinary occasions, at his own pleasure. We sometimes see individuals suddenly reclaimed from the vanities or crimes of a sinful life, hastily transformed in character, their principles of grace matured by a process of rapid sanctification, and their spirits, with small interval between their deliverance from the thraldom of sin and their final emancipation from the bondage of mortality, breathing in heaven a purer atmosphere, and invested with the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Others are early called to contend with unusual difficulties, or to engage in extraordinary services amidst a great fight of afflictions—and their strength is made equal to their day. But in all our expectations in relation to *ourselves*, we are to be regulated by what is common, not by what is extraordinary. And while, therefore, we value assurance as a

blessing of inestimable worth—the pledge, the earnest, the antepast of heaven, it becomes us to seek it by no surreptitious means, to mistake for its hallowed consolations no bursts of feeling, nor any presumptuous confidence; but patiently to wait for it in the course of faith and of obedience, "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ." Any unhallowed attempt to anticipate the constituted order of Providence will issue in disastrous consequences; whether it induces the relaxation of the moral energies of the soul by a premature security, or whether, by being disappointed in its aims, the mind should give way to more hopeless melancholy, or seek relief from its embarrassments amidst the corruptions of the world.

The spirit of the times gives to this great practical question a very grave aspect, since it is to be apprehended that erroneous views of it are prevalent, and spreading among the professors of evangelical doctrine, both within and without the pale of the Established Church. Faith and assurance are confounded. Young and inexperienced Christians are taught in unqualified terms

to look *out of themselves*, and entirely to Christ, and thus to secure confidence and stability in religion. Some of the errors and dangers involved in this mode of proceeding have already been exposed. Its most awful evil is, that it goes to enthrone in the mind a spirit of blind fanaticism, at the expense of all that is simple, reasonable, wise, and of holy bearing in revealed truth —a fanaticism fraught with the very worst, principles and effects of the Antinomian heresy. On the characters of private individuals, it will produce effects of a most pernicious kind; a groundless confidence, not the offspring of filial reliance, but of cold and ignorant speculation, will supersede diligence, and humility, and prayer, and all the salutary exercises of a mind conscious of great interests at stake, and awakened from torpid indolence to think, and feel, and live for immortality. The advantages of a probationary state will be sacrificed to an empirical theology; its excitements will inspire no living energy, its discipline will be despised as superfluous. A vulgar self-complacency, equally offensive to good feeling and sincere piety, will be the natural consequence of thus degrading the majesty of religion, to meet the conceptions of narrow

minds; instead of enlarging the views, and liberalizing the feelings of its professors, by exhibitions of its mighty objects, its weighty claims, and the impossibility of arriving at its future rewards, but by a conscientious regard to the obligations and responsibilities which give all its importance to human life. There is no other way but this last, of at once securing the elevation of the mind, and the humility of the heart—thus preparing the way for the ultimate perfection of our nature. Nor will this spurious gospel fail to vitiate, by a process of easy degradation, the labours of the Christian ministry. The only men who will be tolerated in our pulpits, under the ascendancy of a sickly and contracted system of theological belief, will be those who can stoop to receive their stamp and character from the public mind, sunk in the dotage of moral decrepitude, instead of impressing the public mind with the seal and superscription of eternal truth, fresh and unmutilated from its divine original. The grave and manly expositor of the Bible, whose grasp of intellect aims at the mastery of universal truth, and who would make the mysteries of the gospel subservient to the moral interests of mankind, will be scorned as a

mere legalist, who has yet to learn Christ for himself. His profounder views of the evangelical economy, in its extensive practical bearings, and its subserviency to the righteous government of God; his knowledge of moral science and practical casuistry; his insight into the springs of human action, the nature of religious experience, and the wily devices of the adversary,—all will stand for nothing, when the whole of religion is to be resolved by some mystic alchemy into a species of assurance which puts upon a level the recent convert and the aged saint, and supersedes entirely, at least by just and necessary inference, all that distinguishes Christianity as a system of holy discipline, and as a probationary religion. The popular declaimer, whose thoughts revolve in the same contracted circle with those of his hearers, will be preferred; and ignorance, and conceit, and fanaticism, will lift up the head in triumph. The physicians will take the contagion of the plague, and all will perish together. To guard against the inroad of these portentous evils, let Christians learn to think; let their thoughts be directed and matured by searching the Scriptures; and let all be

sanctified by humble importunate prayer to him who is the fountain of wisdom. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;—faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE SEALING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE DANGER OF GRIEVING THAT DIVINE AGENT.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

THE author of the Epistle to the Ephesians, has set forth most impressively the change produced by the gospel in the condition, the character, and the expectations of its converts; a change, the magnitude of which would appear pre-eminently striking in the case of those who were separated by the power of evangelic truth, from the mass of an idolatrous population, and in a city distinguished by the splendour and the enormities of her pagan rites. The second chapter cannot fail, by its rich and varied disclosures of the

privileges of the faithful, to replenish the mind with topics of lofty meditation, and the heart with emotions of joyous gratitude and hope, while it contrasts the sinner unregenerate and unredeemed with the Christian believer, no longer now an alien and a stranger, afar off from God, but made nigh by the blood of Christ. The Christian is allied to God, the Father of spirits. He is interested in Christ, the Redeemer of the world. He is a temple of the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier of the church. He is a member of the fellowship of saints, the expectant of immortality, and an heir of all things. The privileges of the evangelic dispensation are accompanied with correspondent *obligations*, and the Christian, far from being freed from moral responsibility as a participator of the grace of God, has duties to discharge, of various kinds and absolutely binding, which originate in the peculiar character he sustains as a believer in Jesus Christ. One important class of evangelical duties, arises out of the particular relation in which the Spirit of God stands to all believers as their sanctifier, their guide, and their comforter; and upon their conscientious and habitual discharge of these duties, are suspended not only their enjoyment of the

consolations of the divine Paraclete, but also the brightness of their evidences and the integrity of their profession. Every part of Christianity has a practical bearing upon human conduct; and the facts revealed in the Bible respecting the eternal Spirit, his personal glories, and his holy work of regeneration, are not designed to indulge vain curiosity on a subject of immeasurable profundity—the mode of the divine subsistence; nor to stir up impassioned controversy on a point, which, by its mysterious nature, leaves every order of human intellect equally in the dark; but to induce us in all things connected with truth and duty, to consult the mind of the Spirit, and to yield ourselves unreservedly to his benign and hallowed influences. This design is often overlooked, and never without unhappy consequences. For immense and incalculable is the difference between regarding the person and operations of the Holy Spirit as a mere subject of metaphysical discussion, and treating it, which every devout man will be solicitous to do, as being concerned ultimately with the state of the heart. In the former case, it may be attended with as little religious advantage as the exercise of our intellectual powers upon any other ab-

struse question in philosophy. It may be productive even of pernicious consequences, by habituating the mind to cold and irreverent familiarity with a subject which ought never to be approached but with sentiments of awe and veneration, with the chastened humility which becomes the creature who is conscious of treading upon holy ground. In the latter, it becomes an effectual means of purifying and exalting the character, by inducing fervent prayer for the aids of this celestial power, which alone can arm us with all just thoughts, all good desires, and all holy resolutions, until, at the close of our probationary course, we shall be qualified for eternal communion with the Deity, being filled with all the fulness of God. The more nearly the Christian approaches to that state of fruition and blessedness, the more vivid and deep will his apprehensions be of the value of the work of the Spirit in the scheme of salvation, as the only agency by which a demonstration can be given of the perfectibility of man; the obligations he is under to his mighty aids will sink more profoundly into his soul; and he will feel with ever-increasing force the urgency of the solemn admonition—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye

are sealed unto the day of redemption." These words present to us, the Christian's prospect—the Christian's security—and the Christian's obligation.

I. You have the Christian's prospect—the day of redemption. The words, "redeem," and "redemption," are used in reference to the deliverance of captives, prisoners whether of war or reduced to slavery. The terms are originally and most properly applied to cases in which the liberation is effected by the payment of a stipulated price, called the ransom. In a more loose and general sense the same terms are used when the captive is forcibly emancipated by a power superior to that by which he is enslaved. Thus Israel was redeemed from Egyptian captivity and bondage—not by ransom, but by a miraculous interposition of Providence, by the high hand and outstretched arm of the Lord. The sacred writers have employed the terms in each of these several senses, when describing the redemption of the church of God from the guilt, the spiritual thraldom, and all the fearful consequences of transgression; and they have varied the sense of the terms according to the particular view of the subject which they had before them. In the

first sense, the terms are applied to the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus Christ, as the conditional price, or indispensable consideration, by which the faithful are saved. As it is written, "the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many;" and again, "ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ." In perfect accordance with this use of the terms, and without any violation of propriety, the day on which the Son of man expired in agony upon the cross, and yielded up his spirit, saying, "It is finished!"—that day may be called "the day of redemption." In that day the conditions of our deliverance were fulfilled, so far as it was requisite that the Saviour should suffer on our behalf; and having paid his life as our ransom, "he brought in eternal redemption for us." But although the redemption of the entire church of God was *virtually* effected by the sacrifice of Christ, no individual is *actually* redeemed, until he becomes a spiritual partaker of the grace of absolution and regeneration, and is personally freed, by the moral efficacy of that grace, from the habitual dominion of sin as well as from its condemnation. Hence the terms are made use of in the *second* sense, being applied to that potency of heavenly grace,

by which the sinner is converted from the error of his ways, becomes a believer in Christ, and realizes the blessedness of being "made free from sin." And accordingly Christ is said to have given himself for us, "that he may redeem us from all iniquity."

And here it will not be thought a digression, or if it were so, the importance of the subject fully justifies it, if we pause for a moment to press the consideration of this actual, this moral, this spiritual redemption, as of the last and most weighty concern. Multitudes, we have reason to apprehend, confine their regards to one view of the subject, satisfied with vague notions of the value and efficacy of the blood of Christ, as the ransom of miserable sinners, forgetful of the fact, that the main question respecting themselves is still to be answered; the practical question, whether *they* have been actually delivered, by the belief of the truth, and by the grace of regeneration, from the dominant power of their corruptions, and by a process of spiritual renovation are becoming "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." This is that saving experience of the benefits of the mediation and cross of Christ; that great emancipation from the yoke of our degenerate nature; that in-

troduction to the glorious and immortal liberty of the soul, to which our Lord emphatically alluded, when he said, "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed!"

Still it is manifest, that "the day of redemption," in our text, being a day as yet *future*, and that to which the faithful are to look forward as the result of their being sealed by the Holy Spirit, can neither be the day of the Saviour's death, nor the period of their own conversion to God. The fact is, that the deliverance effected in the present world, the benefits now realized by the faithful, are but partial and incomplete. We know in part—we see in part—we are sanctified in part; nor will the blessedness of the saved be tasted in all its plenitude of enjoyment, until the last enemy shall be destroyed, that is death, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The Christian was redeemed *virtually*, when the Saviour presented his sacrifice to God upon the cross; it was then he made atonement for sin, and paid the heavy ransom by which we are freed from "the wrath to come." His *actual* and personal redemption commences, when by faith he obtains an interest in the grace of Christ, and becomes freed, at least in part, from the vassalage of his errors, his pas-

sions, his accusing conscience, his love of the world, his apprehensions of death and of perdition. He is redeemed *absolutely* and eternally, when he is released from the corruptible body, risen from the grave in the bloom and energy of immortal youth, and finally introduced, a seraphic spirit, into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." This is the end of our faith, and the consummation of our blessedness, when with the last link of the chain of bondage burst asunder, not a trace shall remain of our inglorious subjection to the powers of darkness and of this world. This is "the day of redemption!" What a stupendous subject is here disclosed to the contemplation of mortal minds! Here the Christian revelation appears in all its transcendent majesty, penetrating the deep things of God, and lifting up the mysterious veil, while reason stands confounded, and the pride of philosophy cowers to the dust. What solace in tribulation, in obscurity, in desertion, under the pressure of bodily disease, or the pang of mental anguish, in our conflicts with temptation, and in the article of death! The poorest, the most forlorn, the most dejected of Christians, equally with the most illustrious of the sons of God, the

sainted spirits of confessors and martyrs, is destined to taste the felicity, to share the grandeurs, to sing the triumphs of "the day of redemption."

II. You have the Christian's security. They are *sealed* to that day by the Holy Spirit of God. I shall not attempt an elaborate discussion of the work and offices of the Holy Spirit, in the economy of redemption. To the serious student of the Bible, it will be apparent, that as the love of God is the original source of our salvation, and the sacrifice and mediation of Christ the procuring cause of our acceptance, so also it is the office of the Spirit to regenerate and purify our moral nature; that by the restoration of reason and of conscience to their respective functions, by the exercise of repentance, of faith, and of the devout affections, we may be qualified to receive the grace of God, and to rejoice in Christ Jesus the Lord. "Except a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." In the present instance the apostle suggests to us one particular and extremely consolatory view of the work of the Holy Spirit, when he informs us, that they who

partake of his divine influences, are by that means "sealed to the day of redemption." The figure is easily explained, and its import weighty and impressive. Seals were made use of for two distinct purposes in the intercourse of human life.

1. To mark and distinguish property, so that the merchant who consigned articles of commerce to distant parties or foreign lands, might not have his own property confounded with that of others, nor be without the means of identifying it, and establishing his right of possession, in case of accident or dispute. The use of seals may be traced back to very remote antiquity. For even Job sublimely says of the Deity, "He *sealeth* up the stars." He keeps them under his seal, as their master and proprietor, allowing them at his pleasure to irradiate the darkness of the night, or again veiling and extinguishing their beautiful fires. Or, acccording to the Hutchinsonian philosophy, he fixes, as with his own signet, the orbs of the stars, so that the operation of the skies which moves the earth and planets, should not move *them*. The Spirit of God in believers, is the broad sign of his proprietorship, his peculiar and unalienable interest in them.

They are his sons and his daughters, born from above, and, by every bond of filial affection and reverence, devoted to him as their Father and their God. And the Holy Spirit therefore, whose mysterious influence awakens and cherishes these filial tempers, is called "the Spirit of adoption," as he introduces them to the family of God, and qualifies them for the high and holy communion of the Deity, by impressing on them the moral resemblance of their heavenly Father. On this account, not less than because they are "bought with a price," they are to glorify God with their bodies and their spirits, which are *his*."

2. Another use of seals was for the ratification of contracts between covenanting parties, and to give them a legal form and binding power. They were applied, as in modern times, to written engagements, and were pledges for the fulfilment of a promise or an oath. Thus is the Holy Spirit of God the pledge which he communicates to believers of the inviolability of his promises, and the immutability of the purposes of his love. As it is declared, "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance, until the redemption of the pur-

chased possession, unto the praise of his glory." It becomes therefore a matter of intense interest, to ascertain whether the signet of heaven has been thus applied to ourselves, since we have no other palpable evidence, no satisfactory proof whatever, that we sustain a character that will qualify us to meet with hope and confidence the great day of redemption. Nor is it impracticable to solve this question, if, discarding the reveries of mystic pietism, and the confidence of fanatical presumption, we calmly apply ourselves to search the Scriptures, our only infallible guide. Now, the peculiar designation given to the Spirit of God, instantly suggests the way in which we are to obtain a true reply to this inquiry. He is called the Holy Spirit—and wherefore? Not certainly to distinguish his own sanctity of nature from that of the Father, or of the Son, who are equally and infinitely holy,—but to signify the kind of effect produced, the holy impression and moral change which are the result of his mysterious agency, upon the character of all sincere believers. They become holy, as he is holy; "And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law,

and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Hence it appears, that we can have no evidence on which a thoughtful and good man would rely, of our being sealed by the Holy Spirit, but as we receive the signature and stamp of his moral holiness. This scriptural view of a momentous practical subject, should admonish of their illusion and of their danger, those who, apart from the moral improvement of character, and formation of religious habits, are looking for the seal and testimony of the Spirit, in certain mystic impressions, or powerful persuasions, of which they can render no intelligible account, but on which they repose their convictions that they are of the people of God. Far be it from us to insinuate, that to those who are really "called and faithful," the spirit of adoption may not be imparted richly as a spirit of consolation and of hope. It is perfectly accordant with the gracious dispensation of the gospel, to believe, that the great Head of power and of influence, may vouchsafe to his servants, in seasons of affliction and of weakness, or in cases of very humble and exalted piety, or at the conclusion of

their pilgrimage in the prospect of death, a more than usually vivid persuasion of their interest in the love of God, and of their eternal security. But such communications from on high, suppose "the conscience void of offence," the previous testimony of a man's own mind to his habitual integrity of soul, and they are invariably confined to those whose moral duties and practical devotion empower them to give "a reason of the hope that is in them." Unsupported by this substantial and indispensable evidence, all religious assurance is the confidence of blind fatalism, of ignorant conceit, of a sanguine temperament, of a mind that can believe without evidence, and substitute the dreams of imagination for the realities of truth. On the contrary, the evidence of "works meet for repentance," of a renewed spirit, of a holy temper and righteous life, is not less satisfactory to our reason than it is in accordance with the decisions of the Bible. It is an inference sound and rational, and confirmed by all the analogies of nature and of providence, that if the Sovereign of the universe deigns to qualify any of the children of men for the possession of an immortal and happy existence, by imparting to them a portion of his own moral

purity, he will eventually bring them to his heavenly kingdom. If he has prepared them for heaven, he has prepared heaven for them.

In the arrangements of his providential government, we see him beautifully adapting all living creatures to the climate, the element, the mode and duration of existence for which they are intended. And he that formed the eagle to range the desert mountains, and nestle upon their loftiest pinnacles; he that winged the flight of that noble bird to bathe his pinions and refresh his vision in floods of day, beyond the clouded atmosphere of earth, cannot be supposed to have been more regardless of order, in the administration and arrangements of the moral world. The man of sincere and matured religion is among the most beautiful and exalted of his works, reflecting his moral perfections, and doing voluntary obedience to his will. His mind is enriched with devout sentiments, and daily habituated to sublime thoughts and contemplations of the Deity, which fill him with the consciousness of his own nothingness, while they awaken towards the Author of his being and his redemption, sentiments of ineffable love and profound veneration. The aspirations of

his spirit are ever going forth towards the centre of intelligence and purity. His soul dreads contamination from the touch of a sinful world, and his probationary course is directed to that renovation of his nature, which shall be complete, universal, and immortal. He is conscious that this world is not his element, and would not make it his resting-place nor his home. Believing that to be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord, and anticipating the beatific vision of God, he places the consummation of happiness, in being among the nations of the saved, when they shall have "come out of all tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Of the future happiness of such an individual, we can no more entertain a momentary doubt, than of the unchangeable faithfulness of God. The Deity has affixed to him the impress of his own signet, and he is "*sealed* to the day of REDEMPTION."

III. You have the Christian's obligation. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Here, as in all instances in which human passions and emotions are attributed to the Deity, the language is figurative, and employed in con-

descension to human infirmity. Grief such as wounds and oppresses the sorrowful heart of man, cannot in strict propriety be predicated of the infinite mind. It supposes imperfection, but God is perfect; it supposes mutability, but God is changeless. The language, however, is not obscure, although it be figurative, and the meaning which it conveys is awakening and solemn. It indicates that it is possible for a Christian to pursue a line of conduct, or to indulge in habitual tempers of mind, which, being offensive to the righteous mind of God, will induce the Holy Spirit, in his free and sovereign pleasure, so to act, as if susceptible of the indignant feelings of a man, and prepared to resent the injury he has sustained from a wayward and ungrateful creature. He will suspend or withdraw his benign influences, and the consequences will be as serious to the unstable or inconsistent believer, as if the divine Spirit were really agitated by the sorrowful or irascible passions of the human breast. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit may be thus vexed or grieved by any state of mind, any indulgence of the passions, any course of action, which offers resistance to his hallowed influences, or is calculated to obstruct his work

of sanctification. And in every case, the effects of the withdrawment of the light and energy of divine grace, will be of a nature deeply to be deplored; rapid declension in personal religion; liability to fall without resistance into the snares of temptation; the ascendency of secular passions and interests; the failure of serene and exalted enjoyment in the exercises of devotion; and the departure of the consolations of religious hope; and the hour which brings with it serious reflection and awakened sensibility, will bear witness to gloomy perturbations of the soul, to exclamations of remorse and of self-condemnation. "O that it were with me as in times past, when the candle of the Lord shone around me!" "Restore unto me thy free spirit, and take not away thy Holy Spirit from me!" From a subject of vast extent, we can only select a few important particulars, for the sake of illustration.

1. The Holy Spirit is the author of revealed truth, under whose superintendence and control the apostolic preachers conducted their ministry and composed their writings. Moreover, he is designated the paraclete, or the advocate, whose office it is to plead the cause of God and truth with a regardless and unbelieving world. This he did in the apostolic age by signs

and wonders, and divers miracles, demonstrating by infallible evidences the origin and the claims of the gospel. By his ordinary influences accompanying the ministration of truth, and by a mysterious power opening the hearts of men for its reception, he is still engaged as the advocate of Christ. Every instance, therefore, of wilful indifference, or practical disregard of revealed truth, must be offensive to him who is the great dispenser of truth to the world. To his displeasure *they* must be particularly obnoxious, who, in the formation of their religious opinions, undervalue the sacred Scriptures which are "given by the inspiration of God," indolently or rashly forming conclusions on matters of awful magnitude, or resting implicitly upon human authorities, rather than labour in the study of the Bible, with the resolution of applying to it the energies of their minds, and supplicating the aid of the eternal Spirit, that no false bias of the heart, no unworthy passions, may be allowed to obscure their intellect or enfeeble their efforts in the attainment of truth. Such conduct betrays inadequate conceptions of the reverence due to the word of God, or criminal forgetfulness of the responsibility which attaches to those who have the opportunity of proving all things, and hold-

ing fast that which is good. Without any irreverend contempt of the wisdom of other times, without despising the judgment of other men, every noble-minded searcher after truth will endeavour to read the Scriptures, or make use of every accessible source of religious knowledge for himself, with a mind unfettered by the awe of human authority, or the dread of human scorn. Not less open to rebuke are those who refuse to follow truth when they have discovered her track, and suffer sinister motives to supersede the convictions of judgment in relation to doctrine, or silence the admonitions of conscience respecting any moral duty. The claims of truth are paramount, unalienable, and eternal. To admit them with cheerful homage, is the part of integrity, of honour, of religious principle. To disregard them, discovers a degeneracy of soul, often allied indeed to great and splendid powers, but which inevitably leads to an entire corruption of the heart, the loss of all that can dignify and adorn our nature, and finally, to conscious and remediless degradation. Our proneness to err through the fallibility of our nature, supplies us with the more urgent incentive to seek truth, and to act with decision in those instances in

which the path of duty is unperplexed with doubts. If, by so doing, we pleased God better, our errors would be fewer, and our mistakes less injurious.

It might be supposed that a defective regard to truth, or indifference to error, could not be characteristic of a people distinguished by the variety of religious denominations, and never free from the excitements of theological controversy. It is no paradox however to affirm, that temptations to decline from the love of truth, *for its own sake*, are multiplied, with the numbers and the jealousies of hostile sects, and rival denominations. Within the circle of each distinct community there is not less effort to preserve uniformity, and to bear down by influence every deviation from the prescribed routine of thought and of action, than within the pale of the Roman Hierarchy. So that although there is greater variety of religious creeds, and freedom of choice to select from that variety; the portion of truly exalted feeling, of tolerant principle, of independent mind, of simple love of truth, is much less, than might on a hasty view be anticipated. Few individuals brought up in the bosom of a sect, ever think of meditating or reading, but

with a view to confirm their own persuasions, or to make converts of others. Nor is it less to be lamented, that the temptations to neglect *moral* truth and duty, a nice and scrupulous adherence to every dictate of justice or of charity, are increased by the collisions of ecclesiastical parties. Each division of the Christian church, by dwelling constantly upon its own peculiarities, comes at length to attach more importance to the points of distinction, than to the great and universal truths in which all accord ; and an undue portion of interest being thus devoted to sectarian peculiarities, the weighty claims, the higher duties of morality are in danger of passing into neglect. Hence there is much less of sound, vigorous, and conscientious piety in any particular denomination, than might be expected from the professed attachment to pure doctrine, and exertions for its propagation. And even that noble zeal, so prevalent in the present day, to evangelize the world, is too often detached from the finer and more delicate moralities which form "the Corinthian capital" of true godliness. Far be it from us to depreciate the blessings of religious liberty. We owe every thing to its auspicious ascendency ; our national grandeur, our mascu-

line people, the unrivalled extent of our foreign influence, the liberality of our institutions, and all that constitutes the grace and charm of our country and our home. But through the infirmity of human nature, every form of social life has its own evils; and it becomes us to guard against the abuse of our mercies, lest we confound the sectarian creed with the whole counsel of God; the spirit of a partizan with hallowed zeal; the interests of one denomination of Christians with the prosperity of the universal church. The existence of these evils, affecting not only individuals, but communities, may account for the displeasure of the Holy Spirit, and the languishing state of religion in Christian assemblies. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

2. It will attach yet greater importance to the preceding consideration, if we advert to the design of the Holy Spirit in his revelation and enforcement of divine truth. That design is, by informing the mind, to purify the passions, amend the heart, and produce a character conformed to the will of God, thus qualifying the apostate child of transgression to renew his communion with heaven. "Sanctify them by thy

truth—thy word is truth!" To the accomplishment of this purpose, the facts, the doctrines, the promises, the moral precepts of the Bible, are designedly and fitly adapted. There is nothing defective, nothing superfluous; so that a human being is wanting in the completeness of his happiness and his perfection, in exact proportion to his want of conformity to the revealed will of God; and, on the same principle, a character reflecting an exact image of the truth, would present an example of all that is attainable in real excellence—redeemed, regenerate, immortal man! An object more exalted, or more worthy of the Deity, cannot be conceived, in the communication of revealed truth, since it proposes to assimilate man to his Maker in the possession of immaculate purity. While, therefore, it confirms the importance of our imbibing truth free from intermixtures of error, it suggests impressively the danger of incurring the displeasure of the Holy Spirit by undervaluing that holiness, which is the end of his illuminations. By every thing that is opposed to it, he is grieved:—here to enumerate were endless. We might begin with the indulgence of an evil thought, pass through the successive stages of spiritual declen-

sion, and terminate with apostacy. But we must contract our range of illustration. There is one comprehensive evil, the source of innumerable others,—a defective sense of the turpitude of sin, considered as a transgression of the law of God ; and of the excellence of holiness, as conformity to his will, and expressive of devout reverence of his authority. From this springs want of tenderness of conscience, and delicate susceptibility of pious grief on the smallest known deviation from the line of moral rectitude. This obtuseness of feeling in regard to moral good and evil, as it is the great distinctive feature of the universal apostacy ; so, in proportion to its prevalence in the mind of the Christian, it will retard his progress in religion, by weakening the force of every motive to vigilance, to the use of means, to the sedulous cultivation of the heart, and to fervent supplication for the supply of the Spirit of grace ; thus inducing a disposition to undervalue the aids of that sacred power, without which our strength is weakness, our wisdom folly, and our course retrograde, disastrous, and fatal :—in such a case the result may be foretold, without the gift of prophetical inspiration. For, it is not by being mere passive reci-

pients of grace, that the virtues of Christianity are matured in our hearts. We are not as inert matter in the plastic hands of the great Regenerator. The operations of the Spirit are in entire conformity with our rational and intelligent nature; and the mighty effects resulting from this agency, are seen in the awakening of our faculties from their torpor, and in our being stimulated to co-operate with him, by engaging in an active warfare with sin—a diligent pursuit of moral righteousness. Unless this is done, there is nothing done. The dry bones of the valley slumber in death, until the vivifying spirit enters, at the mandate of the prophet of God—"Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" Religion is vital; it breathes, it moves, it acts, and with an energy calm but intense, with the force of a divine impulse felt through every nerve of our renovated and immortal nature. And our final exaltation to "the glory hereafter to be revealed," will be secured, not by a series of passive emotions or dreaming imaginations, but by the active virtues, the sustained conflicts, the resolute endurance, the patient expectation, the living graces of the regenerated man, who denies

all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lives righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present evil world. Where these effects have not been produced, the grace of life has not been communicated, or the Spirit has been quenched. To guard therefore against the fearful consequences of making the Holy Spirit our enemy, by undervaluing his work as the sanctifier of the redeemed, or by neglecting to avail ourselves of the aid of his grace, the first thing to be secured is a deep persuasion of the indispensable necessity of personal holiness, as that which constitutes the ultimate perfection of our nature, the final cause of our redemption, to the attainment of which the stupendous provisions of the gospel are all directed, and which can only be realized, when we shall awake hereafter in the likeness of God. This persuasion constantly operating with the force of a fixed principle, the temptation to sin, with whatever subtlety presented, will meet with an antagonist power. We shall make duty our cheerful study; not content to avoid gross acts of criminality; not satisfied with narrow scruples in matters of insignificance, while we are lost to more serious affairs, thus straining at the gnat, and swallowing the camel; not aiming to com-

pound for particular instances of delinquency by more rigid performances in another department of morals, but proposing to ourselves the law of God as our rule, the example of Christ as our guide, and universal sanctity as our end, we shall aspire to "be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

It can hardly escape an attentive observer of "the signs of the times," that defective views of the paramount importance of holiness, as the end of the Christian redemption, are prevalent among the professors of the evangelical faith, and a consequent relaxation in the tone of moral feeling. Comfort, and edification, are come to be synonymous. And it may be worthy of inquiry, whether evils of this description do not originate in there not being encouraged amongst us a more complete system of practical preaching, in which moral casuistry, a minute exemplification and enforcement of every particular duty, should hold a conspicuous place. The indissoluble connexion between grace and holiness is generally maintained in theory; yet, from apprehensions of verging towards what is legal—from a godly jealousy, lest the way of salvation by Christ should be obscured, the people of the present day are too prone to substitute clearness

of views with regard to the doctrines of the gospel, together with the excitement of the religious affections, for the whole of religion. Far be it from us to attach less importance to these great concerns, while we extend our regards to another branch of piety; but if we might be more practical, without being less evangelical, it were "a consummation devoutly to be wished." It is not enough to say that the possession of grace is a sufficient security for all the purposes of the moral life; for the heart may be sound when the judgment is erroneous—the conscience may be sanctified, while it wants to be enlightened. And, as the preaching of Christ, in his power and grace, is necessary to keep alive our faith, and love, and hope; so, the preaching of moral duties is not less necessary to guard us from sin, and to regulate the conduct of our lives. In whatever degree any portion of truth is habitually kept out of sight, the mind and the heart will become estranged from its influence, and the neglect of moral truth will be attended by a corresponding defect of moral character. In this state of things the Spirit must be grieved, for "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

3. From the admonition which immediately follows our text, it would appear that nothing is more offensive to this Divine Agent—nothing breathes a more deadly hostility against the moral purposes for which he was given to our fallen race, than the unkind, the ungenerous, the unbrotherly, the perverse and malignant passions of the human breast—passions which are at once subversive of the calm repose and self-possession of a religious mind, and destructive of social happiness in the family, the church, and the world. It is the design of Christianity to restore the broken harmony of the moral world, by the production of a spirit of universal good-will and holy charity, to unite in bonds of immortal amity—man with man—saints with angels—the spirits of the just with the entire family of the virtuous and the good—and all the sons of light with God. And whatever malignancy of feeling, or treachery of friendship, or violation of the sweet and goodly charities of the human breast, are at variance with the accomplishment of this project of infinite benevolence, will be resented with the frown of the Holy Spirit; that Spirit, who in his descent upon our Lord at his baptism, assumed the form of a dove, beautiful emblem of his be-

nignant and peaceful reign! Therefore "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

Nothing, perhaps, has tended more to the extinction of these beautiful charities, than the rivalry, the jealousies, the dissensions, the embittered controversies of sects and parties. It is not my intention to trace to their origin these interminable feuds in the church of God, by an exposure of those intolerant measures, those efforts to produce by coercion a uniformity of faith, those violations of the rights of conscience, and impositions of unscriptural terms of communion, which first of all have compelled the minority, in various instances, either to recede, or basely to surrender the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. We have now to take the fact as we find it, and to suggest its evils and its remedy. The charge of sectarian hostilities, carried on in the spirit of angry warfare, and conducive to any cause rather than that of truth, which with every party is the ostensible pretext, is equally applicable to disputants within and without the pale of the Established Church. In the

present state of things, every real or supposed discovery of an important truth, instead of being a contribution to the common fund, so much thrown into the public treasury, to subserve the interests of the universal body of the faithful, by an accession to its knowledge and its piety, is the rallying point of a new party, and the signal for warfare. All this is in express violation of the apostolic precept, "Keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." This is not to hold the truth in love. This violation of concord by rival denominations has produced incalculable mischiefs. Within the bosom of the Christian church, it quenches the spirit by extinguishing brotherly kindness; and abroad, it confounds the weak, perplexes the doubtful, and gives occasion of triumph to the ungodly. Nor can it fail to retard the progress of Christianity, by substituting intestine feuds for that combination of zeal and charity, that sublime and simultaneous effort for the conversion of the world, which being viewed with approbation by the Divine Paraclete, might insure his blessing, and bear down all opposition. The religion of Christ, it cannot too often be reiterated, is

the ministry of reconciliation ; and it is the office of the Spirit, by giving efficiency to this ministry, to repair the breach which sin has made in the social order of the universe, by the abolition of enmities. So long, therefore, as resistance shall be offered to his pacific influences by the pride and obstinacy of party-spirit, which yields nothing for the sake of reciprocal accommodation, and even thinks it liberality enough to abstain from avowed hostility, or from acts of coercive violence, as if Christian charity were a mere negation—the prospects of the church and of the human race are overhung with gloomy discouragement. Whereas a general dissemination of better feeling would be the auspicious omen of the regeneration of the nations ; nor perhaps, in that case, would the hope be too romantic, that, in some future age, will be realized the beautiful, but hitherto visionary conception of a universal church, in undivided communion all over the world.

The Church of Rome, with all her stupendous power, has failed to accomplish this object. Her error and her defeat lay in her attempting to accomplish it by a forced acquiescence in a strict uniformity of faith and worship. The great, the

fundamental principles of Protestantism—the right of all to think for themselves, and the duty of regarding every Christian, as such, as a friend and a brother,—these principles might constitute the basis of a universal and equal alliance between all the members of the body of the faithful. In modes of thinking—in shades of doctrine—in matters of disputable opinion, men will always differ, while men are fallible. If therefore oneness of thought, exact identity of creed, be the prescribed term of fellowship, their union is impracticable, and they will be divided for ever. But in feeling, in affection, in the reciprocal concession of the rights of conscience, they may fully acquiesce. And if the time ever arrives, in which the church of God on earth, instead of being rent into sections, and marshalled in hostile fellowships, shall merge every disgraceful jealousy in the noble sentiment, "We being *many*, are ONE BODY"—it will be under the triumphant ascendency of charity and of freedom—of evangelic liberty, and of brotherly love! Whether during the existence of the present economy, a felicity so pure and so great awaits the church of Christ, it is not for us to decide. The narrow minds, and still more contracted hearts of multitudes

who are perpetually striving to reduce the majestic stature of religion to their own little dimensions, almost induce us to despair. If that beautiful day awaits us, it must be confessed that we are approximating but slowly towards it. In the mean time futurity is pressing on, and whatever is mean, and selfish, and grovelling, will perish with the present dispensation, while the nobler principles, and finer feelings, which unite us with God and his church, will advance to perfection and expand into immortality. Thus amidst the present anarchy which prevails among the servants of our common Lord, the elements of a better-constituted society are in a course of preparation, and the great Spirit who sheds light and love upon the heart of demoralized man, will behold the consummation of his work in "the general assembly and church, whose names are in the book of life." There the bliss of each individual will be proportioned to his benevolent sympathies, by which the happiness of others will be made his own—a constitution founded upon the highest grace and wisdom; since the blessedness of every particular Christian, on this principle, is capable of indefinite extension as his charity expands, deriving accessions from all

happy intelligences within the range of his knowledge, and concentrating upon itself the inexhaustible riches of the love of God which are everywhere diffused over the face of the universe. And next, therefore, to the beatific vision of "him that sitteth upon the throne," the purest and noblest joy reserved for the spirits of the just, is that, we may suppose, of seeing the nations of the saved emerge from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

If the preceding remarks are just, there may be some reason for moderating our expectations of any considerable outpouring of the Holy Spirit, until existing causes of offence against the Spirit of grace, are removed by a return to the simplicity and soundness of the primitive religion. That the spirit may be *resisted*, *grieved*, *quenched*, cannot be denied, but by a rejection of the testimony of the Scriptures; nor can it but appear presumptuous, to supplicate extraordinary communications of his grace, if there are evils permitted to continue, which are known to be obnoxious to his righteous indignation. The first step to be taken is a resolute and conscientious effort to get rid of these evils. At any rate, our earliest supplications for the

grace of the Spirit, should have in view the removal of those obstacles, which, on every consistent view of the Christian theology, must be regarded as opposed to his more copious effusions. Any other line of conduct would be more allied to ignorant fanaticism or empirical imposture, than to religious sobriety of mind; and will more probably be resented as an affront to his sanctity and his majesty, than approved as a devout acknowledgment of his grace. The promise, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them," is, like all others, *conditional;* or if, in the first instance, the grace of the Spirit is vouchsafed, to those who experience his renewing energy, without reference to any corresponding views and habits of the mind already existing, its subsequent bestowments suppose a previous right improvement of his divine aids. It is not therefore correct to say, with some persons, that as the sinner must come to Christ just as he is, without waiting until by personal holiness he may hope to become acceptable; so must individuals or communities supplicate the influences of the Spirit without first attempting to remove the causes of his displeasure; on the

plea that it is *his* office to destroy these evils, and that no holiness can be acceptable to him but that of his own production. In truth, the statement relative to the penitent supplicating mercy, is incorrect and of dangerous tendency; for no sinner will obtain grace so long as he voluntarily pursues his course of iniquity—he must at once forsake his sins. But apart from that consideration, the cases are not parallel. That of the sinner applying as a sinner for mercy, is distinct from that of the body of *the faithful*, if indeed that distinction befits them in their collective capacity, who, having obtained mercy, have abused their privileges—introduced confusion, disorders, and heresies—and after having corrupted the very means by which he carries on his work, by substituting enmity for love, and partial exhibitions of truth, for the whole counsel of God—are praying for extraordinary effusions of grace, for the purification of the church and regeneration of the world. Under such circumstances, it may be possible to call up a spirit of fanaticism, by the application of false excitements to the public mind. But such effects are to be distinguished from the genuine results of divine agency, whose saving influence operates through

the instrumentality of truth, and are of a nature too reasonable, too pure, too much in accordance with the simple dignity of religion and the beauties of holiness, to be confounded with the insobrieties which in every age have accompanied a false enthusiasm. When the great founder of the Christian church, in his intercessory prayer, supplicated that the world might be converted to the faith of the cross, one of the means to which he attached especial importance, was the example of unity and of love to be supplied by his disciples; and that example in the apostolic age produced effects not less prodigious, perhaps, than the manifestations of miraculous power, accompanying the preaching of the faith. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me!"

DISCOURSE V.

THE REDEEMER AN EXAMPLE OF SOLITARY PRAYER.

LUKE v. 16.

And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

THE life of our Lord Jesus Christ was a life of uniform and habitual piety; a divine harmony pervading his entire character, his principles, his actions, and the pursuits in which he exhausted his days. All was consistency, sobriety, dignity, and truth; precisely what might be supposed to become a being, who having been in the form of God, condescended for a season to veil the effulgence of his divinity, and, in the likeness of man, went about doing good. It is not less instructive than it is delightful, to trace this unbroken har-

mony extending to every trait of the Redeemer's character, and every action of his life; since it affords one of the most convincing evidences of the sanctity of his person; and, by direct implication of the divine origin of his work as the Christ of God, thus confirming the faith of the Christian, and confounding the projects of the unbeliever.

If, on the contrary, this great teacher had been observed to fluctuate in his course with the wind of popular opinion, impelled by new passions to new pursuits—if in private life he acted on principles irreconcileable with his public professions—if this exalted advocate of religion, whose fearless eloquence carried trembling and dismay into the hearts of transgressors, had been himself open to crimination, it would have cast more than suspicion over all his lofty pretensions; his reputation as a prophet of the most high God would have been sullied; and while his claims to the honours of the Messiah were thus abdicated or annulled, the cause of Christianity would have received a stain never more to be effaced. But no such difficulty presses upon our faith. His enemies, with keen and vigilant malignity, marked him, tempted him, and left no effort un-

tried to entangle him in absurdity or contradiction. But their malice was disappointed, and their efforts to ensnare this innocent victim recoiled upon themselves with dreadful retribution, and covered them with indelible infamy. Even Judas, the traitor Judas, who had witnessed his course of life, as one of the companions of his private and social hours, and notwithstanding the enormity of his guilt, possessed a conscience too susceptible of remorse to reap the fruits of his crime—Judas confessed, "Behold, I have betrayed innocent blood!" Of the evidences of the Christian religion, so various, so conclusive, and ever deriving fresh accessions from the progress of events and the accomplishment of prophecy, none are more perfect than that which arises from the character of the divine Author of our faith—that character which calumny could not blacken, which never came in contact with dishonour, which was alike impregnable to the assaults of open hostility and treacherous friendship, and which was ennobled by traits of the sublimest piety, both upon the open theatre of public life, and in the hours of his deepest solitude. In the temple, he vindicates with indignant severity the honours of insulted Heaven—

and when he retires from the gaze of the people, he is still engaged in the service of God. "And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed."

Let us take occasion from these words, to inquire, on what principles, or for what reasons, our Lord devoted himself frequently to solitude and to prayer—and what advantages may be derived by the faithful, from imitating in this particular the example of the Saviour.

I. Upon what principles are we to account for our Lord's frequent retirement for solitude and devotion? Of these the evangelists have recorded several instances, showing that it was not an incidental occurrence, but a beloved and cherished practice. From the circle of his friends; from the applauses or tumults of the people; from the villages, the towns, the cities, in which he exercised his awful ministry, he retired alone to the solitudes of Judea; and in the stillness of the night, and surrounded with the gloom of deserts and of mountains, he held communion with the Father of spirits. Apart from the agitations and conflicts of the distracted world, amidst savage rocks, and by streams whose lonely waters murmured to the winds of

the desert, was to be found the author of our redemption—the great prophet who was "mighty in deed and in word"—the mysterious incarnation of Deity.

And if it be inquired why he thus secluded himself from human intercourse, it may be replied, that amidst all his superhuman grandeur, he was nevertheless *a man*, although a man in blessed and ineffable union with God. He had the infirmities although not the sinfulness of human nature. He was made in *all things* like unto his brethren, with the exception of his sinless purity. And it might be expected therefore, that he would frequently seek relief from the bitter trials he endured, and from the laborious work he had to accomplish, in the most unearthly and elevating of all human occupations, communion with God in solitude. And where could a public character, so popular, so harassed with incessant importunities, secure that solitude, without interruption, but by escaping to the recesses of the wilderness? where perhaps he held converse with the etherial inhabitants of other worlds, which it was not for mortals to witness or to disturb. More particularly,

1. The Redeemer would be impelled to culti-

vate solitude and devotion by the fervour of his piety.

Where there exists true religion, it must, and it will, breathe a devotional spirit, and delight in a heavenly atmosphere. It expresses itself in praise, in adoration, in prayer, in humble prostration of soul before the throne of infinite Majesty. And as our Lord was to be held up as an example of the most perfect and unalloyed religion, it was necessary that he should be known, in an eminent degree, to have maintained habitual communion with God in the holy exercises of the heart. If we find the sweet singer of Israel, who was only a mortal man, and an imperfect type of the Redeemer, ardently longing and fervently supplicating for communications of celestial grace—if in the fulness of his soul, he exclaims, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" can we be surprised that one who was in all things *greater* than the psalmist, should delight himself in abstraction from the discomposing influences of the restless world, and pour forth his spirit in the divine presence, when no other witnesses were near him than the rocks of the desert, or the ministering angels who watched over him in the days of

his humiliation upon earth? The selection made by our Lord of the wilderness as the place of prayer, furnishes a high authority for saying, that to a mind happily attempered, no scenery is so conducive to devotional feelings as that of nature in her simple majesty; nor can we hold communion with God under more auspicious circumstances, than when, surrounded with the monuments of his glory, we feel the universe to be his temple, and rejoice that he who deigns to save us, is the great Spirit that moveth upon the face of the waters—holds in his fist the winds—formeth the mountains—garnisheth the heavens with stars of light—and dwelleth in eternity.

2. This solitary communion with God was necessary to preserve his holy mind from the contaminations of the world, incident to the possession of a material body, and his participation of human nature. It is true that he was "without sin"—that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners—that he was without guile and without spot. But how was this immaculate purity retained by one who was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh"—when he was so often and so powerfully tempted—when there was so much provocation not only to

agonize his heart but to irritate his passions—when he was treated with brutal contempt and insulting laughter—when every thing conspired to divest him of that calm self-possession which he sustained with superhuman dignity — when, with reverence be it spoken, he performed the greatest of his miracles, in the moral power which he exercised in the controul of his own feelings under the the exasperations of inhumanity and scorn—when he thus retained his purity untarnished, his benevolence unimpaired, his serenity unperturbed? By what influence was his human nature thus sustained, thus preserved for a pattern of incorruptible sanctity? Must we not trace it to his uninterrupted communion with the fountain of all grace? since admitting that our Lord was, strictly speaking, a partaker of human nature, and none more strenuously maintained this than the advocates of his Deity, he must have been replenished with moral power from the same source and by the same mode of procedure, as those whose nature he condescended to assume. By this he was incessantly replenished with new energies; and being enriched by the Spirit from on high without measure, because *he never ceased to implore it*, he passed

through the world without the smallest taint of its evil, as a pure celestial being, whom nothing mortal could possibly touch, and much less still communicate to it the base infections of earth and sin. God is the fountain of spiritual purity and of moral strength; and it was by imbibing constantly the streams which flow from this uncreated source, that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ maintained its holiness in transcendent beauty and immaculate sanctity, throughout the entire course of his humiliation and conflict.

3. In solitude and prayer, the Redeemer was invigorated to pursue and to accomplish his great work.

How great that work was, how arduous, how difficult, and what mighty energies of mind, of heart, and even of physical strength, it called for, none can be ignorant who have read the Gospels and who have understood what they have read. What constant warfare with the ferocious pride, the maddened passions, the relentless infidelity of the Scribes and Pharisees! What anxiety of incessant thought, what sleepless activity of mind, to repel their attacks and expose their malice! What deep sympathy with the crowds of miserable

objects who resorted to him with every species of disease, that they might be healed, and every bitter sorrow that they might be comforted! And how must his sinless spirit have been troubled, when he wept tears of bitterness over the follies, the crimes, the unrepented guilt of a people who were about to dip their hands in his innocent blood, while the judgments of heaven were impending over their devoted country!

That the sensibilities of the Redeemer were most acute—that he was susceptible of intense suffering, even to agony of spirit—may be regarded as a necessary consequence of the perfection of the intellectual and moral constitution of his nature, in which were to be found, in harmonious combination, all that was great in mind, noble in sentiment, delicate in feeling—all that gives dignity and grace to a soul of untainted purity. To a being thus constituted—alive to the outrages committed by the wicked against the sanctities of religion—himself the object of their bitterness, because the advocate of righteousness and of God—receiving insult and scorn in return for ineffable compassion; to such a being, the trials attendant on his ministry must have come home with a severity of distress in-

conceivable to all but the sufferer himself. Although to his persecutors he presented a serene and undaunted aspect, his heart secretly bled for the wrongs of violated truth, their rejection of the mercy of heaven, and the miseries of a people rushing headlong to perdition. The power of endurance is limited. There are extremes of mental and of bodily anguish, under which humanity sinks, and life, or reason are extinguished. This is a provision made by infinite mercy as a check upon the power of inflicting misery, and a security to the victims of persecution that their pains shall speedily cease, when they are aggravated into torment. Without this provision, existence might become a curse, in a world like this, into the moral administration of which, as a consequence of sin, so much of suffering is found to extend. Even within the limits of endurance, there are agonies which would crush the energies of the soul, and destroy both fortitude and hope, but for aids administered by the grace of heaven, to the suffering child of the dust.

In applying this train of reflection to the awful subject before us, let it be repeated with profoundest reverence, that he who redeemed us to God by his blood, was "the *man* Christ

Jesus." With all the grandeur of the Godhead, "he was found in fashion as a *man*." And since we do not read that a perpetual miracle was performed to secure his *human* nature from the lassitude of sorrow, the exhaustion of his stupendous labours, and, above all, the perturbations of the soul, which beyond all other malignant influences embitter or destroy existence, did he not need often to retreat from the field of conflict, and renew, in solitary communion with God, his oppressed and exhausted powers? In these seasons of deep retirement, perhaps, he was sustained by the sensible presence of those ministering spirits, who were afterwards with him during the mysterious agony of the garden. Thus was he qualified from time to time to resume his mighty course of endurance and of mercy, until, after a life graciously sacrificed for a fallen race, he accomplished their salvation, and finished the work that was given him to do!

4. Our Lord, by this habit of retired devotion, afforded an example and an illustration of his own doctrine, and condemned the hypocritical and ostentatious worship of the Jewish elders.

In the days of his incarnation, ignorance and superstition had so completely taken possession

of the public mind in Judea, that the higher classes affected an extraordinary degree of piety, by worshipping in the precincts of the temple, and in the corners of the streets. Frequent and loud were their prayers; and what rendered this ostentatious display of religion the fitter object of contempt and detestation, was the gross immorality which at the same time was practised by these scandalous pretenders to devotion. The history of our species has yielded abundant proof, that the union of hypocritical or fanatical devotion, with the most entire dissoluteness of morals, is not only a possible thing, but that it has been resorted to, too frequently, to pacify conscience, or secure a fictitious reputation among men. These men of Israel were of selfish hearts, and of profligate manners, equally prompt, as the occasion might be, to make long prayers in the audience of the people, or, to plunder the poor, ruin the defenceless, and oppress the fatherless and the widow. In estimating the comparative turpitude of human delinquencies, nothing can appear more odious to a righteous mind, than this monstrous combination of the profession of religion with the systematic violation of its authority as a scheme of moral government. No class of per-

sons, therefore, appear to have kindled a more lively indignation in the breast of the Saviour, nor did he spare them. He who spake as never man spake, mild, forbearing, gentle as the whispering breeze, when he addressed the uninformed and misguided multitude, reserved the thunder of his denunciations for these sanctimonious traitors to truth and righteousness. He admonished the people against imitating their example, or being imposed on by their pretensions: and insisted on the exercise of those inward affections, which would express themselves in acts of devotion when the eye of the world was withdrawn; not less amid the solitudes of the wilderness, than in the midst of the temple. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray, standing in synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men; verily I say unto you they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth thee in secret, shall reward thee openly." To enforce by his own example these admonitions; to afford a practical demonstration of their truth;

to evince his own persuasion that the Divine presence was not confined to the synagogue or to the temple; but that the Father of all listens to the voice of the suppliant, although that voice arise from the loneliness of the desert; he often withdrew himself from popular assemblies, and the ordinary converse of mankind, that he might retire to the wilderness and pray:

> Cold mountains and the midnight air,
> Witnessed the fervour of thy prayer;
> The desert thy temptations knew,
> Thy conflict, and thy victory too!

II. We are now to inquire what advantages we may expect to derive from imitating the example of the Saviour in this particular instance.

To suppose the disciple in less need of perpetual supplies of grace than his Lord—less disposed to yield to the trials of life, or better armed for the conflict—this were folly, presumption, madness.

1. Solitude is favourable to that calm, reflecting, and pensive state of the mind, which is suitable to the higher duties of religion.

Under no other circumstances can the same advantages be realized. In the ordinary business of life, which produces so much absorption of time,

and of necessity concentrates the thoughts upon the secular interests of the day—in the customary intercourses of society, which compel an attention to the affairs of others, often to the neglect or forgetfulness of ourselves—in the tumult of the world, which, incessantly appealing to our senses, disturbs the inward musings of the soul, or occupies the imagination with objects foreign in their nature to those of religion,—amid these interruptions which cannot be avoided, but by fleeing from intercourse with men to intercourse with God, there cannot be enjoyed such serenity of the mind as is congenial with thoughts and feelings of a highly religious order. In the social engagements of every day, whatever guard a Christian may set over his mind, and with whatever conscientiousness of integrity he may conduct his transactions with the world, there is no ample season for undistracted attention to what is spiritual, divine, and immortal—no perfect repose of the passions—the tumult is never hushed—other interests than those of religion must engage the intellect and the heart—and there is perpetual danger lest they should obtain a disastrous ascendency, to the neglect of those "things which belong to our peace." These are not the con-

jectures of a recluse, whose unsocial habits lead him to imagine that the world is not less irksome to others than to himself. No. Men of reflection, who have aimed at other objects than a servile conformity to the prevailing manners and pursuits, have always complained of its intrusions, and deplored its tyranny. They have anxiously fled to some calm retreat from the perpetual confusion of human life. Retirement, occasional retirement, has ever been valued by those whose minds have been nobly independent of the current events of the day, deriving more steady satisfaction from their own resources, and rich in the possession of knowledge and the consolations of religion. Of all that is eminently great or good, of all that imparts honourable distinction to the individual, or confers benefit on society, by giving a wider range to the dominion of truth and holiness, the foundations have been laid in solitude. Whether he be employed in the more important secular concerns which bear upon the great interests of society, or whether he be a minister of religion called to discharge the functions of the sacred office, no man, in the ordinary course of events, will be rewarded with distinguished success, who does not interchange the relaxations

of solitude with the duties of public life—sometimes indulging in complete repose, and at others devoting much of his time to silent meditation, weighing thoughts, reviewing opinions, arranging facts, cautiously arriving at conclusions, and thus preparing, by the cultivation of his own mind, to secure an ascendency over the minds of others. Even then, if he be too conscientious or too honourable to seek popularity by flattering the ignorance or the passions of the multitude, he may be driven to solitude, as a refuge from the ingratitude or malice of men; nor will he fail, under such circumstances, to reap the advantages which previous habits of retirement will qualify him to enjoy. The philosopher, the legislator, the orator, the statesman, have *there* collected the materials and the elements of their success. And *there* the Christian, above all men, must prepare to fulfil the duties of this life, and to meet without consternation the solemnities of the world to come. Can that man whose thoughts are always hurried—whose passions are never cool—who yields himself incessantly to the casual impressions, or treacherous allurements of the world, commune with his own spirit, or, "rapt in the visions of

a divine enthusiasm, ascend towards him who rideth upon the wings of the wind?"

2. In devout seclusion, the realities of religion are brought more closely home to our consciences and our hearts, and we feel more deeply our individual concern in their truth and their consequences.

This is matter of immense importance, and of equal difficulty. Although religion is admitted to be a personal concern, in which every man is as profoundly interested as if there were no third being in the universe besides himself and his God, and as if he stood isolated and trembling in the presence of his Creator—yet how rarely is the feeling persuasion of this fact brought home to the heart! How often do men converse on the subject of religion, reason on the principles of religion, or listen to the obligations of religion, enforced by its sanctions, while death and eternity are known to be at hand! And still they forget to apply it to themselves, still refuse to bring it home to "their own business and bosoms." Even they, who are in a measure impressed with the conviction that personal piety is indispensable, and that every branch of religion ought to tell upon their own consciences and hearts, neg-

lect still the application of truth to themselves. It is not possible that this delusion should continue, if we pray to God in private with becoming seriousness of spirit. We must then feel that disguise is hopeless, that forms will not be accepted for realities, and that it is an impious mockery—a prostitution of our minds to what is morally base, an indignity offered to the omniscient Spirit of the universe, if we do not present to him the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. It is *then*, while imploring mercy, that we feel our dependence, our abjectness, as miserable, mortal men. It is *then*, while confessing our transgressions, that we sweetly rejoice in the Saviour, who pitied our wretchedness, and rescued us from perdition by the sacrifice of himself. It is *then*, while musing upon the vanity of every earthly pursuit, and when the dreams of life are detected in all their emptiness, that we seek refuge in the unchangeableness of God, and taste the powers of the world to come. Separated from others, far from the observation of every human eye, it is *then*, we utter with reverence, "*Thou, God, seest me!*" In short, our thoughts are recalled from other objects, and turned upon ourselves, as they will be in the judgment of the

great day, when every individual will be conscious of his individuality, and rejoice or "mourn apart."

3. A life of faith in opposition to a life regulated by the exclusive interests of the present world, can only be sustained by habits of private devotion. "The just shall live by faith."—The great business of the Christian life is to obtain and to cherish so firm a persuasion and so sweet a relish of things spiritual and eternal, as shall make *the future* predominate over the present,—thus supplying motives of the most cogent nature, whose force shall be habitually felt, for vanquishing the temptations of this transitory world. It is the design of God, in calling the faithful by his grace out of the sinful world, to qualify them for the exercise of *this faith;* and the gospel presents to it, an *invisible* Creator and Father, who, beyond the range of mortal vision, administers the affairs of the universe—an *invisible* Redeemer, who, though once made manifest in the flesh, has ascended into the heavens, and been received out of our sight—an *invisible* state of existence reserved for the children of the kingdom, and not to be disclosed in its fullest glory until mortality shall be swallow-

ed up of life. He who realizes these objects, and feels, and thinks, and acts, in conformity with the purposes for which they are revealed, lives by faith. But their influence is opposed and often counteracted by the visible and tangible objects of the world, tempting us by the seductions of pleasure, the allurements of ambition, the calculations of interest, or the threats of calamity, into disregard of the unseen and infinite. In the Scriptures, therefore, the passage of the believer through this probationary stage of his existence, is represented by images drawn from the alarms, the solicitudes, the fatigues of a military life, since we are so circumstanced that every thing about us conspires against our chief interest. Between faith and sense there must be a continual conflict. Faith directs us to the way of righteousness, to the consolations of hope, to the glories of a spiritual redemption, to the kingdom which cannot be moved, to "the land that is very far off." But, assailed by the incessant importunity of our senses, our appetites, and our passions, from which there is no entire escape, so long as we inhabit "this body of death," we are in danger of disregarding "the things of the Spirit," and of sinking ignobly into

subjection to the world. And by what means is faith so to maintain its superiority, as finally to overcome in victory? While sensible objects are hourly pressing upon our notice, and those of eternal duration are unseen and untouched, how can we succeed in "setting our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth?"

To weaken the temptations of the world, we must retire from its immediate influence, and make it the object of distant and solitary meditation. To invigorate our faith, we must draw near to the fountain of grace and power, and, as in the presence of Deity, contemplate from this vantage ground, the realities of the spiritual kingdom, which, though to the eye of sense invisible, are within the range of that faculty of the regenerated soul, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Let those, therefore, who would not only escape the pollutions of the world which war against the soul, but who aspire to a course of progressive holiness, which shall resemble "the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day"—let them maintain, by frequency of prayer, their communion with God. While

bending in adoration, suppliants at the throne of grace, their apprehensions of truth will be enlarged, their intellectual vision strengthened, and their hearts expand to the refreshing and renovating influence of the light of heaven. If it were presumption to look for the miraculous exaltation of the chief of the apostles, who, wrapt in ecstacy, beheld in spirit what mortal eyes cannot see, and mortal tongues are forbidden to reveal; still there are moments of happy elevation vouchsafed to those who walk habitually with God, in which they experience more than ordinary impressions of the beauty and the majesty of the eternal state, and are favoured with some blessed foretaste, adapted to their present capacities, of "the glory hereafter to be revealed." These are not the illusions of imagination, produced by false excitement in minds distempered, enfeebled, and uncontrolled by reason, but satisfactions not less rational than they are sublime, naturally arising from a vivid persuasion of the realities of the unseen world, connected with a living hope through faith in the Redeemer, of a personal interest in their glories. The Scriptures sanction the belief and expectation, that in proportion to the ascendancy of

faith in the devout mind, these divine refreshments may be looked for; nor can we put any other construction on the language of Saint Peter, when, speaking of the trial of the Christian's faith, in connexion with "the appearing of Jesus Christ," he finally adds, "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*." In these hallowed seasons, when the Christian ascends on the wing of faith to other and brighter regions, he seems to dwell for a time amidst scenes of pure and immortal happiness. He penetrates the mysterious veil which is suspended between time and eternity. He beholds the awful vision of God and of the Lamb. He mingles his devotions with those of the spirits of heaven, and kindles with the sacred fire that burns upon the celestial altar. And when he descends from this high and holy communion with the seraphic intelligences of light, to mingle again in the conflicts and tumults of the world, like Moses when he came down from the mount, he brings with him a reflection of the uncreated splendour. He is armed afresh against all the enervating influences of temptation, the lassitude

which paralyzes exertion, and the fears which damp the ardour of the soul; and is prepared to prosecute, in a course of calm but determined resolution, his march towards immortality. There is no refuge from the world but in communion with God—no defence against its power but the influences of his grace,—this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith!

4. It secures an effectual refuge amidst the sorrows and the calamities of human life.

To expatiate on the inevitable evils to which we are exposed, and from whose pressure no condition of human existence is exempt, were an easy but useless employment. But since it happens, while none are prepared to deny that "man grows up to mourn," that the mass of mankind with equal weakness and impiety shun the only sovereign antidote to misfortune and misery, it is of more importance to hold forth the refuge which presents itself to the Christian, and which is equally accessible in every "time of need." Of all the consolations which can be derived from created sources in the hour of distress, those are the most soothing to the heart, which flow from the bosom of sympathy, of friendship, of hallowed love: and these are the consolations,

but of an order immeasurably higher and more perfect, which the believer finds in holy communion with God. God is the father and the friend of his people: no unconcerned spectator of the labours and sorrows of their pilgrimage, he deigns to represent himself as sympathizing in their distresses, and bids them "cast their care upon him, because he careth for them."

To the measure of those supports which are to be derived from habitual intercourse with him who is the fountain of all good, it is impossible to assign any limitation; since the treasures of his grace being in themselves inexhaustible, the Christian will partake of their fulness in proportion to the sanctity of his character, the simplicity of his reliance, and his vivid perception of the all-sufficiency of God. And these being capable of indefinite increase, it is not difficult to conceive, that they may amount to an almost perfect antidote to the afflictions of life, producing an unperturbed serenity of soul which the waves of tribulation may in vain attempt to assail; elevating the mind, as it were, to a higher region, from whence the tumults and agitations of the world are heard as the murmuring of distant waters. But passing by the ordi-

nary afflictions which intermingle with every condition of humanity, it is important to remark, that for those exercises of the mind, those anxieties or terrors of the heart which originate in the sinfulness of our nature, and in the anticipations of death and of eternity, there is absolutely not even the shadow of a refuge but in the friendship of God. The calamities commonly incident to human nature are embittered in the estimate of a thoughtful and serious mind by moral considerations. They are the penal effects of transgression; although, in regard to the faithful, they are overruled to operate as a remedial discipline for the purification of the heart. Viewed as indications of the retributive justice of Heaven, expressing the displeasure of the righteous administrator of the moral government of the universe, they assume a gloomy and menacing aspect.

In moments of awakened feeling and of vacillating faith, they may produce an agitation of the soul which may be construed into a presentiment of wrath and of judgment to come. These inward disquietudes, arising from a consciousness of the moral relation in which a sinful creature stands to God, can only be relieved by an assur-

ance of his readiness to forgive. And since none can forgive sins but the Being against whom we have offended, the tranquillity of the soul is to be sought at the throne of grace, and can be maintained in no other way: pleading the merits of the great sacrifice, we shall have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The man who is acquainted with this refuge, and who habitually flees to it, may be pronounced happy, whatever may be the aspect of a mysterious Providence, or the temporary fears which assault his peace. Let him be pressed with cares until his heart heaves heavily the sigh of distress—let him enter the deep waters of affliction, while friend and comforter are put far from him—still he can say, "Why art thou cast down, oh, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God!"

There is an hour at hand from which nature and guilt recoil. But to the Christian, death approaches as a vanquished foe, and with blunted sting lays at his feet the trophies of victory. For his entrance into the eternal world will bring him, not to the presence of "the unknown God," but

to the house of his Father, with whom, having long communed by faith, he is now to meet in the beatific vision.

On the whole, it appears that frequency of solitary devotion is a great Christian duty, the discharge of which is connected with our happy prosecution of the divine life; equally indispensable to our tasting the consolations of religion in their purity, and to our consistent and honourable discharge of moral obligations. Its effects will be felt in the use of all other means of grace; particularly will it have a favourable influence on our public worship of God. He who comes forth from silence, meditation, and prayer, will bring to the offices of social religion a heart already glowing with hallowed affections, and is thus prepared to receive the ministrations of the word of life, not with the fastidiousness of the critic, but the Christian spirit of humility and of docile faith. He brings a blessing with him, and "to him that hath, more shall be given." Not so they who are not "instant in prayer." Their hearts are as the heath of the desert; no fertilizing showers have fallen upon this field, and no fruits of righteousness can be expected to appear. Like the fleece of Gideon, which remained with-

out moisture, while all around was refreshed with the dew of heaven.

Objections to the efficacy of prayer, founded on any supposed philosophical principles, but in reality having no support but in the spirit of unbelief, are worse than frivolous when opposed to the example of the Redeemer, and the experience of the faithful. To a mind, indeed, under the dominion of the power of religion, all such objections are felt to be impotent as they are antichristian; since, in every instance of true piety, there is an inward prompting of the soul towards the exercises of devotion, not less mighty than the most energetic instincts of nature, and operating with the force of her laws.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE SABBATH, AN EMBLEM OF THE HEAVENLY REST.

HEBREWS iv. 9.

There remaineth a rest to the people of God.

THE disclosures which it makes of futurity, constitutes one of the peculiar excellences of the Christian revelation; since the *certainty* which it attaches to the realities of the eternal world cannot but have a powerful moral influence upon the human mind, awakening consideration amidst the levities of the passing hour, and arming the believer, amidst temptations and sorrows, with hopes which neither persecution nor calamity can destroy. These disclosures are of necessity limited to our present capacities. We cannot rise to the contemplation of heavenly things, *as*

they are, inasmuch as they are invested with a transcendent glory which none but higher intelligences can apprehend, and which places them beyond the reach of faculties so contracted as those of man. Could we even suppose that visions, not emblematical, but presenting true resemblances, could be set before our minds, the miraculous appearance would be too refulgent for humanity to sustain ; and overwhelmed with great emotions like him who, in his way to Damascus, beheld the insufferable light, and heard the voice of the Son of God, we should sink in blindness, in confusion, in trembling dread. In condescension, therefore, to human infirmity, our faith in the futurities of religion is directed and supported by images taken from the objects of our present experience. The language in which the final condition of the faithful is described is figurative ; and analogies and resemblances are employed, illustrating unknown objects by those which are already familiar to the human mind, or interesting to the human heart.

One representation of exquisite beauty and power is suggested by the Sabbath day—the day which, from the beginning of the world,

through the long lapse of successive ages, has been dedicated by Divine appointment to the solemnities of religious worship. Nor can we conceive of a happier or more attractive illustration of the future blessedness of the righteous, than is presented in the idea of a SABBATICAL REST. It is instantly felt that such a representation clothes the subject with a solemn kind of enchantment, which fixes attention, awakens the imagination, and comes home at once with forcible interest to the heart that is not estranged from the finest and purest sensibilities of our nature. When we call to mind the various mental associations, equally sacred and delightful—the hallowed pleasures—the recollections and anticipations—the fair immortal hopes—which, like the day-spring from on high, bless the passing hours of the Sabbath, as the Christian sometimes spends it upon earth,—does not the representation of our text bring with it a serene and refreshing influence to the spirit? or, amidst the din of strife and the weariness of labour, can any thought be more consolatory to one who is a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth, than that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God?"

I. The Sabbath is a day of rest from secular concerns, from the business and labours of the week.

"Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." If the rigour which guarded the Sabbath under the Mosaic dispensation, and which degenerated into superstition, is no longer enforced, still its original authority calls for the cessation of ordinary labour; nor are there wanting considerations to prove that, *as a day of rest*, it was observed before the Mosaic economy existed, and from the commencement of time. If, with the moral duties of the Decalogue, it was incorporated with the Mosaic law, like them it possessed an antecedent authority independent of that temporary institution; nor could the abolition of the law therefore weaken the force of obligations which existed from the beginning, and which derived no additional *moral* sanction from being solemnly repeated on Mount Sinai. In this point of view,

if we extended our thoughts no farther, the Sabbath, as a day of suspended toil, is to be numbered with the most merciful of divine appointments. It provides a short but sweet and valuable respite from the infliction denounced upon apostate man—"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground." To the more laborious classes of society it yields a relief and a solace, which is often so little prized because it is so habitually enjoyed. How sweet must be the morning of the day of rest to the toil-worn peasant, if he be a religious man, whose energies have been exhausted by six days of industry, to support in honourable independence his wife and his children! How enviable his feelings, when the sun rises upon the hallowed day, whose hours are destined to pass along and to close in the quiet pleasures of home, or in the solemn engagements of religion, in which "the rich and the poor meet together, for the Lord is the maker of them all!" Nor to a humane mind is it matter of little concern, that even the animals that labour for man, stretch their weary limbs while the implements of husbandry are laid aside, and tasted the sweets of repose. The artizan, too, pent up in his chamber

at other times, amid smoke and gloom and the poisoned atmosphere of cities, gains his freedom, and breathes the air of heaven, while he goes forth into the fields, and in perfect consistency with the design and spirit of the sabbath, meditates upon the works of God, or pours forth his heart in devout ejaculations of praise.

Even the most degraded condition of humanity is visited by the cheering influences of the sabbath, and slavery loses some of its wretchedness. The captive negro, exiled from the home of his fathers, and doomed to labour in distant climes, to enrich with unrighteous gains his rapacious lord —even *he* is allowed this day of rest; a concession extorted from tyranny itself to the natural equality of all mankind, as expectants of immortality. The voice of the task-master is silent, the scourge of oppression sleeps, and an hour is given for dreams of distant, long-lost happiness, or hopes of future emancipation from the dishonours of captivity, when death, as the poor African believes, shall give back the wanderer to the woods and the waters of his native land. Even here, amidst the islands of the western sea, the chosen habitations of cruelty, and terror, and despair, where death ceases to be regarded as an

evil—even here, the sabbath brings a season of rest, and the transient illusions of liberty or the sweeter consolations of religion — where the missionaries of the Cross have been suffered to carry the glad tidings of eternal redemption—come with their refreshing influences to the help of the captive and the slave! In a world of calamities, of oppressions, and of wrongs, all have reason to love the sabbath, which, wheresoever that sacred institution is acknowledged, brings to all some suspension of labour or mitigation of suffering. Beautiful emblem of the "rest which remaineth for the people of God!" *There* the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. The weariness of labour, and the fears of ruin and of want, sad inheritance of fallen man, shall never more be felt. No restless days of vanity, nor feverish nights of dreams and terrors. No gloomy forebodings of fearful times of penury, of desertion, of treachery from friends, or violence from foes. No conflicts of the mind perplexed with difficulties, harassed with disappointments, seeking after truth and baffled in the search. The warfare with temptation and with sin will be over, and the triumphant establishment of the reign of grace will leave the soul

undistracted and free for the more exalted pursuits of religion, the contemplation of God, communion with the spirits of the redeemed, and the serene enjoyment of immortality. "I heard a voice from heaven, say, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for *they do rest from their labours!*"

II. The sabbath is dedicated to the worship of God. With the man of sincere devotion, whose heart is a temple of the divine Spirit; every day is a season of praise and of prayer; every act an expression of homage; every current event an occasion of some holy thought; every place under the sun, an oratory where an altar may be raised, and the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit presented. Religion is the atmosphere in which he breathes, the power of its principles is felt to pervade his entire existence, he acts habitually as under its awful dominion, and with the consciousness of a responsibility which is never suspended, "whether he eats or drinks, it is to the glory of God." But on the sabbath there is a special and public expression of devout sentiment and religious homage, when God is acknowledged, and adored by the multitude of the faithful who keep holy-

day. At this season the mind is professedly disentangled from the business of the world, and diliberately prepared, by abstraction from the secularities of life, for the more solemn performance of the offices of Christian piety. It is on this day that the most weighty and impressive principles of religion are presented to our consideration, and under circumstances which bring them home with deeper interest to the heart. For our social feelings and our most cherished sympathies are awakened, while we mingle in the crowd who come to the house of God in company, with them unite in singing the songs of Zion, and with profoundest sentiments of adoration repeat the hymn which other generations of the faithful uttered in ancient times—"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord! My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God!" To a thoughtful mind—and all ought to be thoughtful—there is every consideration connected with the sabbath, to awaken and foster the spirit of devotion, and at once to tranquillize and elevate the soul. It is a day set apart by divine appointment, stamped with his authority, honoured with his blessing, and sacred

to Himself. It has been sanctified by the faithful through every succeeding generation from the beginning of time, outliving the revolutions of this shadowy and fitful world, in which the monuments and institutions of men have perished, and thus forming a connecting link between the most distant ages and generations. It commemorates to us the most momentous of all events, the CREATION of man, when he was made in the likeness of God; and the RESURRECTION from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ; thus reminding us that man in his first estate was the child of heavenly providence, and that even amidst the ruins of apostacy and sin, his interests and his happiness are still dear to God, who is not willing that any should perish. It admonishes us of our own immortality. And, what cannot fail to awaken tenderness and awe, we most commonly assemble for worship in places where our fathers, who are now gone to their rest, have been accustomed to pray before us; while around, on every side, as if to remind us of the doom that awaits the living, whose days also are numbered, are scattered tombs, and vaults, and time-worn epitaphs, sepulchral monuments of the dead! There is much in all this

to awaken pious emotion,—the scene before us recalls the past—connects itself with the future. With expansive energy the soul rises into great and solemn thought; we are borne away from earth to more ethereal regions, realizing our alliance and our fellowship with the spirits that are before the throne: a consciousness of moral graudeur, consistent with the profoundest humility, a persuasion, even while the shadows of death hover around us, that we are something more than mortal, takes triumphant possession of the mind, and with a feeling which resembles, if any thing *can* resemble, an approximation to the Divine Majesty, we utter the sentiment of the apostle, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." But there awaits us another temple and richer ministrations of grace "within the veil: whither the forerunner is for us entered." And the religious services of the faithful here below, delightful as they are sometimes felt to be—the devout assembly convened on the morning of the sabbath—the reading of the Book of Life—the prayer of contrition and of faith—the aspirations of gratitude—the songs of Zion sung with the melody of the heart,—yield us but faint concep-

tions of the adorations of the heavenly host, where "the voice of the multitude shall be heard as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" There every soul is filled with living inspirations, and there the presence of the Creator, veiled in the mild effulgence of the Redeemer, diffuses universal joy, and love, and veneration, through all the nations of the saved.

Oh! could we drink more deeply into their spirit now, we should more frequently experience a foretaste of the celestial blessedness, and the tabernacle of God might be said to dwell among men! But this is not our rest; such visions of glory are reserved for those whose pilgrimage is over, and who are before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

III. The Christian sabbath is set apart for moral and religious instruction, for the enlargement of our knowledge in divine things, the confirmation of our faith, and expansion of our charity.

This is eminently the case in this free and Protestant country, in which the pomp of superstition, and worship conducted in an unknown

tongue, have given way to the free circulation of the Scriptures in our native language, and the unrestricted ministration of divine truth. To read and study the sacred volume—to hear the doctrines of the gospel enforced by the preacher upon the conscience and the heart—to enrich the memory with sacred facts—and to meditate upon the deep things of God,—these form part of the sabbath employment with the Christian, and from them some of its sweetest satisfactions are derived. The ministers of religion, in the discharge of their peculiar functions, are not the only dispensers of knowledge and advocates of righteousness on this day of rest: the father of the Christian family, reserving from the public worship of God sufficient time for private and domestic piety, calls his children and his servants around him, and improves the graces of his own heart while endeavouring to expand the views, to impress the feelings, and to form the characters of those whom Providence has entrusted to his care. The leisure, the repose, the subdued and hallowed feelings of the day, are favourable to such occupations. And could we assume the nature of some benevolent aerial being, and visit unseen the families of righteous men, what beautiful

scenes of domestic affection and piety would sometimes present themselves to our view! scenes which the heartless and repulsive spirit of infidelity, or the pride and profligacy of fashionable life, may look down upon with contempt—but scenes which do honour to human nature, and contribute in some humble degree to avert the curse of heaven from a profane and demoralized world. It is a lovely sight to behold the affectionate and intelligent parent reading the Book of Life, and explaining, as he reads, the meaning of the sacred page. The children, rapt and motionless, hang upon his lips; while all give proof, by the fixedness of their attention, that an interest is excited in their hearts, and that they love to hear, from the voice of their revered instructor, of that greater Father which is in heaven, the parent of angels and of men. The majesty and the goodness of God; the wonders of creation, exhibiting in every department of animate and inanimate nature the design and the wisdom of Him who formed them; the misery brought upon the human race by sin, and the redemption of a fallen world by the atonement and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; the grace of the Saviour who came to die for sinful men;

the need of regeneration by the Spirit of truth and power; the duties of morality and the happiness of a life adorned with Christian virtues; the glories of the celestial state, and the blessedness of those who part on earth with the hope of meeting again, when the whole family of God shall be gathered together in one; and the ample recompense in store for patience, and self-denial, and habitual piety, in "the rest that remaineth for the people of God;"—*these* are subjects which, being peculiarly appropriate, are often recalled on the sabbath, and sanctified by prayer; they have been the means of training up multitudes in religious families to honour and usefulness in the present life, and of preparing them for happiness in the world to come.

Assuredly, there can be nothing absurd, nothing contrary to sound reason or to divine revelation, in the supposition, that the pursuit and contemplation of truth will form much of the employment, and contribute extensively to the happiness, of the spirits of the just: so that the largest acquisitions we can now make, shall appear as feeble conceptions, contrasted with the more expanded views of the soul, when "we shall see as we are seen, and known even as we are known." Such

an expectation may appear grovelling to ignorant fanaticism, but it is accordant with the nature of our intellectual faculties, which, as they afford us pleasure in this life, in proportion to their cultivation and their subjection to the guidance of moral and religious principle, may be expected to form, in their more vigorous exercises, much of the glory and happiness of heaven. There is no piety in the supposition, that either here or hereafter, the Deity can be honoured by a voluntary debasement, on our own parts, of our intellectual nature.

Every circumstance will then facilitate the enlargement of these faculties, nor amidst ever fresh excitement will they sink back into inaction. Disencumbered of these material bodies, rescued from prejudices which ignorance has fostered, and from passions equally unfriendly to the soundness of the judgment and the purity of the heart, we shall see beyond the horizon which now contracts our vision, and delight ourselves with more stupendous views of the works, the designs, and the moral administration of God. There our disabused and emancipated reason will behold things in their just proportions, in their natural connexions, in their moral weight,

and many subjects will fall into insignificance, which now breed fierce contentions and angry controversies between discordant sects; while others, too little regarded now, because placed by their simplicity beyond dispute, will rise into transcendent magnitude, and be felt in their native grandeur. Truth and love will maintain their united dominion, and divided communions will meet in one Temple as THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF GOD.

IV. The Sabbath is a day of religious intercourse and fellowship amongst good men.

If, by the constitution of his nature, man is formed for society, it is equally true that religion both strengthens and purifies the social instincts. The faithful convene for the best of purposes; their mutual improvement in what is moral, spiritual, and holy; the common establishment of their faith and hope; the commemoration of the Saviour's grace; and the united service of God. "They take sweet counsel together, and go to the house of God in company." Nor can it but produce feelings of very high satisfaction in a devout man, to find himself surrounded in the house of prayer by others, who, like himself, are doing homage to the great Master of assemblies,

and mingling their vows and supplications before the altar of mercy. To feel that they "being many, are one body;" and that they are allied in faith, in hope, and in charity, must enlarge the pleasure and deepen the solemnity of the day of rest. "The communion of saints," however, like every thing besides that is connected with human infirmity, is at best imperfect in the present state, and not seldom enfeebled, interrupted, or outwardly suspended, by circumstances which render questionable either the correctness of our principles or the warmth of our charity. Differences of feeling, or of sentiment, rash predilections, or disgusts, and the too frequent ascendency of selfishness over the benevolent affections, often break asunder the fellowship of kindred spirits. Even at the sacramental table, where we behold the symbols of the union of the Redeemer and his Church, it cannot always be said, in the most noble sense of the terms, that we have "fellowship one with another." There is consolation in the thought, that every impediment to concord, every principle which has a tendency to sever the bond of fellowship, will perish, with all that is evil, in the grave, and that the faithful will take nothing

with them into the eternal state, but "the "charity which never faileth." Their differences relating to non-essentials, which have no substantial reality as compared with the immutable relations of moral truth, can have no existence in that world, the only indispensable qualification for which is, the rectitude of the heart renewed after the image of God. That in which they are now assimilated to each other, is that which alone constitutes their preparation for eternity: while those points which are magnified into grounds of dissension, are precisely those which have no necessary connexion with everlasting life.

It remains, therefore, for the future state to display, in consummate perfection, that union which it is the design of Christianity to effect between all holy intelligences, who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, or engaged in the common service of God. *There* the righteous of every dispensation, simply as the righteous, will meet in oneness of heart; not as having been members of any particular community, but as heirs of the kingdom;—once children of wrath, but now redeemed, holy, and immortal. Where the spirits of the patriarchs, who died in faith, now live in

glory; where prophets, apostles, and martyrs, with the universal family of the saved, meet in the infinite presence—no murmurs of distrust—no mutual suspicions—no rancour of hatred—no violation of charity can exist. The venom of the serpent cannot infect that untainted atmosphere. Such an assemblage, of whatever is fair in the likeness of Deity, excellent in created or redeemed existence, must be the pledge of harmony and of peace. It is the habitation of God through the Spirit—and "God is Love."

V. The Sabbath, under the Christian dispensation, is particularly designed for a memorial of the resurrection of our Lord, and all its engagements have relation to Him, as the Mediator.

Its transfer from the last day of the week, on which it was celebrated by the Jews, to the first day, which, with few exceptions, is observed by Christians, was probably intended by the apostles as an expression of faith in the Redeemer; thus distinguishing it from the Jewish sabbath, and at the same time protesting against their unbelief and rejection of Christ. This honour done to him is in accordance with the relation

he bears to a sinful world, as the Saviour, the Intercessor, the only Redeemer of the guilty and the lost. To *Him* we owe, as mediator, not only the original institution of the day of rest, and the restoration of its simplicity afterwards, but that inward peace of the mind, without which external repose from the labours of industry, or from the bondage of Judaic ceremonies, would be of little consideration. Our liberty of access to the mercy-seat is in virtue of *his* sacrifice and mediation. The knowledge of *his* grace, and of the duties of evangelical obedience, are the most important attainments we can make. Nor is the sabbath distinguished by any more momentous consideration than that it affords us the opportunity of learning *Him* crucified—*Him* risen, ascended, exalted—*Him* reigning as the sovereign and legislator of his church —*Him* dispensing, as the fountain of grace, the saving influence of the Spirit—*Him* holding supreme dominion in the economy of redemption, and subordinating to its interests the entire course of providence—*Him*, coming to judgment. *He* is the centre and the bond of that union, which subsists among the faithful who are the members of the body of which he is the

vital head. In a word, Christ is the Lord of the sabbath. And it is in proportion to the simplicity of our faith in him, and the sincerity with which we love him, that we shall enter into the spirit of the Lord's-day, and realize by happy experience the blessings with which it is fraught. Thus, the duties we perform on this day as religious beings, the privileges of grace bestowed upon us as a redeemed and holy generation, the hopes which spring up in the soul while redemption and immortality are set before us,—all connect themselves with *Him*—nor perhaps on any other occasions does the believer feel his heart so sweetly and powerfully attracted to the Saviour, or receive larger communications of grace. The Lord of the sabbath owns and blesses his own institutions, by rendering them sources of consolation, of peace, of joy, of holiness, to his faithful servants; and they draw water out of the wells of salvation, to refresh and invigorate them in their way to God.

In the celestial state, the Redeemer will occupy a place equally conspicuous, and stand in a relation equally momentous; but with this difference, that he will no longer be an object realized only by faith, "unseen, yet beloved."

He will there be visible to the faithful; and in the splendour of his mediatorial kingdom, in the majesty and grace of his glorified humanity, an object of devotion, of affection, of reverential regard, to the general assembly and church, redeemed by his precious blood. Then will be seen, exalted amidst the acclamations of that great convention of happy spirits, the object of their love, the author of their blessedness—not as the babe of Bethlehem, but the ancient of days—not as the man of sorrows, but the Lord of life and glory—not as the persecuted victim of oppression at the bar of insulted justice, but the Judge himself of quick and dead—not as a lamb led to the slaughter, but the lion of the tribe of Judah, terrible in strength and awful in majesty—not as dying for sinners, but as the resurrection and the life, receiving the homage of that countless multitude, whom he has rescued from the depths of perdition, to "walk with God, high in salvation in the climes of bliss."

As in the present world, the Son of God has been the medium of divine communications to mankind, representing the majesty and manifesting the grace of God, in modes adapted to

the infirmities of mortal minds—so perhaps in the future world, all that finite creatures, however exalted, can behold of the glories of the Deity, will be presented through him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of his person—his glorified humanity being designed to facilitate the communion of the spirits of the just with Him who dwells in inaccessible light.

Thus *to be with Christ*, and to "behold the King in his glory," will consummate the felicity of his saints, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

These we may suppose to be some of the resemblances which exist between the employments and the pleasures of the sabbath, as the faithful spend it upon earth, and the sabbatical rest of eternity. Imperfect, and indeed feeble, is the sketch we have attempted, and unspeakably beneath the solemnity and magnitude of the

subject; but it may suggest to the contamplative mind other thoughts, and nobler images, which shall awaken feelings in some measure correspondent with the greatness of the subject, if it arrests the attention of the devout hearer, and excites him to pursue his own train of meditations.

From these resemblances, we turn—

VI. And present to your attention an important point of contrast.

However delightful the pleasures of the sabbath, or considerable its moral advantages, it yields to the weary pilgrim but a transient repose. It supplies the occasional refreshment only of the traveller, who has again to arise and pursue his journey. Thus are all things on earth of temporary duration, and a melancholy interest approaching to sorrow blends itself with the serenest enjoyments of human life. When Moses, on the heights of Sinai, had beheld a vision of the Divine Majesty, he had again to descend from the radiant mountain, and to bear with the provocations of the rebellious people. When, on the mount of transfiguration, the disciples had seen their Lord clothed in the brightness of celestial light, although they thought

it good to be there, the supernatural effulgence quickly passed away, and left them to the gloom of that awful solitude. When St. Paul had been rapt into the third heavens, the inner court of the celestial temple, and there had beheld unutterable glories, from that lofty elevation he came down to pursue the thorny pilgrimage of life, with the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. So, when the Christian has communed in spirit with things divine and immortal, the shadows of the evening lengthen, the sun of the sabbath goes down, and the following morning brings with it the labours, the anxieties, the temptations of the world. Thus transitory in their duration are the brightest hours, the happiest seasons which earth can yield to the devout mind. They suffice to invigorate and to cheer in the prospect of continued toils, but they afford no permanent repose. Contrasted with this, the *perpetuity* of the future sabbatical rest, attaches to it a deeper interest, and renders the anticipation of its coming ineffably delightful.

The *repose* of that sabbath will be succeeded with no renewal of conflict or of weariness, but refreshed with perpetual accessions of strength,

the spirits of the redeemed will enjoy uninterrupted security from alarms, and will know nothing of danger, but perhaps the remembrance of their former struggles, when they were sojourners in the vale of tears.

The *worship* of that sabbath will be a continuous act of service and homage to Him that created, to Him that redeemed them, without languor of devotion to call for the sigh of penitence,—without any cessation of that flow of devout affections which, with seraphic ardour, will go forth towards the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The *religious instructions*, the moral improvement of that sabbath will be lost by no treachery of the memory; it will be impeded by no dissipation of the thoughts. New and enlarging sources of wisdom will perpetually open upon the blessed, and while their minds are purified from error, and disentangled from prejudice, every expanding view of truth will be sanctified to the service and love of God. The impressions of truth will remain indelibly and eternally fixed, as they are made upon the mind, only susceptible of indefinite increase in number and variety—while the sources of

knowledge being infinite, there will ever remain scope for the yet illimitable progress of created and finite minds.

The *fellowship* of the saints—the communion of the redeemed in the common service and the common bliss, will be an immortal alliance of all the good in the enjoyment of all that is happy.

And, the *presence of Christ* will never be withdrawn, for we shall be for ever with the Lord!

But, ah! what mean we by an eternal sabbath? What is this interminable duration which gives to the rest of the believer its consummation of blessedness?—It is not for mortal minds to conceive. We are brought to the verge of an abyss, whose depths we cannot fathom, whose expanse is boundless beyond the measurement of thought, and we are lost in the grandeur and immensity of our own prospects. Let us wait, and hope, and adore!

While the Christian sabbath is thus an emblem and a pledge of the state of the blessed, let it be remembered that it supplies the means by which we may be prepared and qualified for its immortal fruition. "Remember, therefore,

the sabbath-day to keep it holy." Let its high and sacred character be ever present to your minds, persuaded that it was appointed for no trivial purposes—that, if there are benefits of a subordinate nature to be derived from it, such as the respite afforded by it from the labours of the week, these are not its most noble distinctions, but that it is an institution founded by a mandate of the Deity to secure from oblivion the most momentous facts, and to exist throughout all generations, a memento of the moral government of God, and of the eternal destinies of man. Let the day, therefore, which testifies that God is righteous and good, and that man is redeemed and immortal, be spent in a manner correspondent with these stupendous facts. Let it not be desecrated by an exclusive pursuit of objects and interests, which can do nothing, and worse than nothing, towards the salvation of the soul, while they lay the foundation of remorse and terror upon the bed of death. Be not satisfied as if all were done, when you have performed with decorum and order the outward offices of Christian piety, whether in the family or in the church. Even the imaginations of the heart should be

guarded, every dream of sinful levity suppressed, and the mind resolutely and conscientiously directed towards religious truth and duty. Above all, let it be a day of cheerful gratitude, and of joyous thanksgivings, as becomes the auspicious season which the great Spirit of the universe has set apart for receiving the homage of his creatures, and for ratifying his grace to the children of the dust. It is not for Israel, in the hour of hope, in the prospect of redemption, to hang their harps upon the willows, as if nothing befitted their condition, but silently, and in sorrow, to listen to the sullen murmurs of the waters of Babylon.—REJOICE IN THE LORD. ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE:—BE THANKFUL UNTO HIM, AND BLESS HIS NAME. FOR THE LORD IS GOOD, HIS MERCY IS EVERLASTING, AND HIS TRUTH ENDURETH TO ALL GENERATIONS! THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE. IN IT WE WILL REJOICE AND BE GLAD!

APPENDIX

TO THE DISCOURSE ON FAITH.

ON SAINT JAMES'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS.

THE justification of which this Apostle treats, chap. ii. verses 14—26, is supposed by some to be that of a *sinner*, showing the terms or conditions on which he is graciously pardoned, and treated as though he were righteous. By others, it is said to be that of a *professed believer*, stating the practical evidence by which he is to make his profession credible, so proving the sincerity or reality of his faith as to justify his claims to the Christian character and hope.

To ascertain in which of these senses the sacred writer is to be understood, it is of consequence that we place ourselves, as nearly as possible, in the situation of the persons to whom his Epistle was addressed, without the previous bias which modern theologians, of every school, must almost unavoidably bring to the study of the Scriptures. There are but few men to be found, whose minds are not trammelled by the authority of great names, or by the prejudices of education, fostered by the early and continued habit of viewing an important subject only in one light, and of searching professionally for arguments to be employed in defence of long-cherished opinions, regardless of such arguments

as may make against them. To this may be added, the unconscious, perhaps, but real apprehension of compromising themselves with the particular church or denomination of Christians to which they belong, and with whom they might impair their credit, their influence, and their usefulness, if suspected of a departure in any minute instance from the received "faith and order." Under such circumstances, men of upright and conscientious minds come to the decision of difficult or controverted passages of Scripture, subject to influences extremely unpropitious to the discovery of truth. Nor is there any other satisfactory explanation to be given of the opposite conclusions to which individuals of equal purity of intention are seen to arrive. Instead of ascertaining the character, the sentiments, the habits of thinking, by which those persons were distinguished, to whose peculiarities the sacred writer originally intended his Epistle to apply, they come to the study of his work, as if it was addressed immediately to themselves, or to that section of the Christian church to which they are attached, and to be interpreted by their own previous conceptions, and already-settled faith.

To the persons to whom the Epistle of James was addressed—converts from Judaism, multitudes of whom, probably, had not seen the writings of Paul, much less examined them with critical accuracy—there could hardly be a question that the justification, to secure which both *faith*, and the *obedience* of faith, were necessary, was the justification of a sinner, *as such*, before God. The object he had in view was the correction of a fatal error maintained by a certain class of persons, who, professing to believe the Gospel, were still living in the neglect or violation of moral duties, and never-

theless concluded that they were in a state of acceptance with God. They had mistaken or corrupted the doctrine of salvation by faith. The error of these people did not consist in the persuasion, that by a *profession* of faith merely, they would be entitled to justification—that was not the point; but holding a speculative belief without practical piety, they regarded themselves with complacency as being in a state of grace and salvation. The question, therefore, to be considered was, the terms or conditions of a sinner's justification and interest in the blessings of redemption; and he treats it accordingly. For the Apostle to dwell on the necessity of *faith*, as being essential to that object, was needless; on that general principle, there was no difference between him and his opponents. Conceding, therefore, and assuming that men are saved by faith, he proceeds to show that such faith must be vital, a principle of living and practical piety. Without such a faith, containing in itself the seminal principles of universal goodness, there would be no salvation. Hence it would be a vain plea, if any man should say he had faith; for without works, it must be condemned as a merely speculative belief, consistent with a life of sin and exposing to final judgment. And hence he asks, in perfect consistency with his entire argument—abruptly and most pointedly—"CAN FAITH SAVE HIM?" That question contains the key to the subsequent discussion, the whole of which proceeds on the principle, that faith *alone* cannot save—not assuming the possibility that *genuine* faith *can* exist *alone*, but that a false and spurious faith, a mere credence of the truth may so exist, and still leave the sinner dead in trespasses and sins.

"Can faith *save* him?" No. As well might you suppose that the faith of demons would save—that an

exanimate corpse will perform the functions of life—that the father of the faithful would have obtained justification, if his faith had not been of a kind to produce an implicit reliance on the Divine mercy, and an unmurmuring obedience to the Divine commands! Such is the sum of the argument. Nor is there any evidence to be derived from any part of the entire discussion, that he quits his first subject for another—that he passes from the justification of the *sinner*, to the justification of the sinner's *faith*, so as to make the latter the main topic of his discourse. That would be an irrelevancy, into which other and uninspired minds might more easily fall.

As an inference, it certainly does follow, and is suggested by the Apostle's mode of treating the subject, that no man can justify his faith to man or God, whose life is at variance with his professions. But this is *incidental* only to the course of his reasoning, and not the leading subject to which the rest is subordinate. Nor does it appear possible to the writer of these pages, to interpret the language of the Apostle on the opposite hypothesis, but by a procedure as remote from simplicity, as sophistical and forced, as any that is to be found in the writings of the most obnoxious theologians, who have been charged with wresting the Scriptures.

When the Apostle emphatically asks, "Can *faith* SAVE him?" does he refer to the *acceptance* of a *sinner*, or only to the credibility of his faith as a believer—to his ultimate salvation, or only to his present evidences of a state of grace—to the salvation of his *soul*, or the salvation of his *reputation* as a professed believer?—When he affirms that, "faith, if it hath not works, is *dead*, being alone;" does he mean to declare that such a faith may be *living* and *effectual*,

so far as the justification of a sinner is concerned, but only not sufficient without obedience to demonstrate its own sincerity before God and man? Or, to avoid this, very palpable absurdity, are we to embrace another, supposing the Apostle by a *dead faith* to mean *no faith*, and to raise an argument upon a nonentity? When he intimates that mere belief is the faith of demons, does he intend that such satanic persuasion of the truth—although, while disconnected from works of faith, it cannot establish a character of righteousness—may notwithstanding be a ground of the sinner's acceptance with God? Or, once more, when to illustrate his point he cites the same example with St. Paul, and affirms that the faith of Abraham, in offering Isaac, was rendered complete by his works, adding, "and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, 'Abraham believed God, and *it was imputed to him for righteousness*.'" Are we to understand, or rather would "the twelve tribes" understand, that the obedience of Abraham, which is declared to have perfected his faith, and without which his faith as a saving principle would have been nullified, was in no *direct* sense a verification of the Scripture, that his faith was imputed for righteousness—forming no consideration in the Divine mind, as a ground or condition of his being justified, or treated, though a sinful man, as a righteous person? Or, appealing from human authority to divine, must we not adopt the conclusion to which St. James arrives, and which, without having deviated from his original subject, he states broadly, without qualification, and in most unequivocal terms,—"Ye see, then, how that by *works* a man is JUSTIFIED, and not by faith only!" This passage is conclusive as to the point, that the *faith* and the *works* refer to the

same justification. It is also conclusive as to the fact, that it is the justification of the *sinner* himself, not of the credibility of his faith; since on the other hypothesis it would follow, not only that a man's works demonstrated his faith, but that his faith also, apart from works, afforded a demonstration of itself, in opposition to the doctrine to support which the hypothesis is assumed.

After all, the distinction that is attempted between the justification of a sinner by faith, and the justification of the faith of a sinner by works, is only verbal, a mere logomachy, not substantially affecting any great question—not yielding the least real advantage to those who make justification depend upon the simple act of faith, to the exclusion of the works that follow it. The advocates of that system, with the exception of avowed Antinomians, admit that saving faith is not mere belief, but a holy principle, a fruit of regeneration, and insuring a life of moral righteousness—a faith in its nature and operation inseparable from good works. As a holy principle, therefore, and not as a mere belief, it is accounted to him who believes for righteousness. If faith is imputed for righteousness, then all that is implied in the exercise of that faith, all that enters into its nature and constitutes its essence, *must be included in that act of imputation*—the disposition of the mind, the state of the heart, and the habits of life which as necessarily follow, as the stream is connected with the fountain from which it flows. It is impossible to separate faith, as a religious principle, from the works, the righteous course of life, which must result, and are designed to result from its exercise. If, therefore, it is objected to those who make faith, and the obedience of faith, of equal

necessity to the justification of a sinner—that it nullifies the value of the death of Christ, by making righteousness come by law—the objection, supposing it valid, applies with equal force to their opponents, since on all hands it is allowed, that faith, considered as a principle of action, is essentially a principle of holiness and a pledge of religious obedience. And to attempt to separate the *efficacy* or *acceptableness* of saving faith, from that which enters into its very essence, constitutes its entire value, and apart from which it can have no intelligible existence, involves the consequence of reducing it to a mere nominal quality, and is to impute our justification to a nonentity.

When, therefore, the Apostle Paul affirms, that "a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," he cannot be understood to include in those "deeds of law," the obedience of faith; since that would, by necessary implication, abrogate faith itself, and subvert his own doctrine. And even if *his own* writings did not prove this, which they do most satisfactorily, it would surely be as reasonable a procedure, to explain and qualify his statements by those of James—which are equally of apostolic authority—as to force a doubtful construction on the language of the latter apostle, which is in itself extremely clear, that it may accord with an interpretation, not less doubtful, put upon the language of the former.

To reject the works of faith as a ground of justification, on the plea that they are superfluous for that purpose, being the works of an individual *already* justified *by his faith*, is to overlook the nature and properties of saving faith, which, as we have seen, cannot be conceived to have any existence apart from moral dispositions, and which contains in itself the seminal principles of all

moral goodness. It is a fallacious play upon the word, regardless of its import. For although it be true, that he who exercises saving faith is, by the very terms, in a state of justification, it is not by any one act of the mind that he becomes so, but inasmuch as that act may indicate the possession of the spirit of grace, which, if he lives, will manifest itself in holy deeds, and without which no act of trust or reliance would be acceptable to the Searcher of hearts. To be consistent with themselves, they who advance this plea ought not only to attribute the acceptance and salvation of the sinner to the single act of embracing the Saviour by faith; but to regard that act as performed apart from the holy disposition that would constitute it a *religious* act,—thus reducing it to a mere assent of the judgment, as distinguished from the affiance of the heart. But holding as they do, the faith of the justified to be the exercise of a principle essentially holy, and the germ of all godliness, they do virtually, as well as ourselves, include in their faith the works of faith—and if *we* make righteousness come by law, so also do *they!*

But in truth, on neither hypothesis does righteousness come by law, in any sense to vacate the sacrifice of Christ, or the great evangelical doctrine of salvation by free grace. In either case, both faith and the obedience of faith, are supposed to be the fruit of redemption; and they who maintain that good works performed by a believer are necessary to perfect that faith which is the ground of justification before God, do not claim for these works any meritorious efficacy on which a system of self-righteousness may be raised. All they mean to assert is this, that God as a righteous Being, cannot, even as an act of grace, for the sake of Christ, pronounce any man in a state of acceptance with Himself,

who is not in possession of a holy principle; and that he who has that principle, shall have it accounted to him for righteousness, although he received it at first from God, freely and gratuitously in virtue of the mediatorial work of Chrst. Nor does this involve the monstrous consequence, that persons holding this doctrine expect salvation through obedience to a mitigated law of works. The moral law being founded on eternal and immutable relations, cannot be revoked, nor its obligations ever relaxed. But they contend that the obedience of faith, imperfect as it is, will be accepted—not as a reward won by any independent merit of the sinner himself—but because, so far as it springs from holy motives, it is the produce of Divine grace, *as such* is intrinsically excellent, and will meet with the reward of righteousness, freely dispensed through the redemption of the cross. In this view, to disparage the good works of a real Christian, as having in them nothing essentially good, nothing to constitute an evangelical ground of justification, is, however undesignedly, to degrade the work of the Redeemer, and the offices of the Holy Spirit; it is not to exalt, but to dishonour the grace of God, "from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift," for "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

While serious apprehensions are expressed by many, lest by impugning the doctrine of salvation by faith *alone*, the sacrifice and mediation of Christ should be made of none effect, and they who differ from them are charged by direct implication with the rejection of the only Saviour—let such persons beware of the tendency of their own principles, or, deceived by merely verbal distinctions, they may contend for the shadow of truth while they lose its substance, and unawares neutralize

the gospel, or corrupt it, by indirectly countenancing a most pernicious heresy. The death of Christ may be vacated, not more by a system of self-righteousness than by any scheme which impairs the sense of moral obligation, by substituting a spurious for a living faith, since the ultimate design of Christianity is to form "a people zealous of good works." Faith in Christ is not the end of the gospel economy, but a means towards the accomplishment of an ulterior object,—the restoration of a revolted race to their allegiance to God, and the re-establishment of the moral dominion of the Deity in its entire ascendancy over all that can debase his creatures or render them miserable. The doctrine of salvation by faith *alone*, which James pronounces to be a *dead* faith, and which Paul never taught, may be guarded and qualified by devout and intelligent preachers, so as to be rendered comparatively innocent. In the mind of an individual having *true* faith, its effects would be corrected and limited; but proclaimed by individuals of another order, to promiscuous assemblages of people, who are told that they have nothing to do but to believe in Christ and all is safe, while the nature of that faith remains unexplained, and its operation is limited to a mere act of reliance, it becomes fraught with danger, with delusion, and with ruin. The doctrine, as modified by St. James, leaves the grace of Christ in all its freeness; the meritorious ground of a sinner's hope unshaken in the sacrifice of the Cross; while by putting the doctrine of salvation by faith in a form consistent equally with the love and the righteousness of God, it secures the great interests which the Deity has in view in the moral administration of the world.

APPENDIX

TO THE DISCOURSE ON ASSURANCE.

REMARKS ON DR. MALAN'S VIEWS OF ASSURANCE.

BY THE REV. MR. CHAPLIN, OF BISHOPS STORTFORD.

[The following lines are extracted from a letter which was put into the hands of the writer of the preceding discourses, after they had been sent to the press. The letter was written at the time when the ministry and the publications of Dr. Malan were obtaining considerable popularity in this country. Struck with the simplicity and force with which the subject is treated, and happy to find his own views corroborated by those of a friend, not more distinguished by a correct and powerful mind than by his habitual love of the truth,—he solicited and obtained permission to append it to the Discourse on Christian Assurance.]

I HAVE no idea of that sentimental sort of faith which brings sudden assurance to the mind, irrespective of scriptural evidences of a work of grace upon the heart. I am told again and again in Dr. Malan's works, that I am to believe Jesus Christ died *for me*, and took away my sins. And it is surprising with what facility Dr. Malan makes converts in this way, posting them in a very summary manner upon the heights of assurance. But the Bible gives me just the same authority to be-

lieve that Christ died for *others*, as that he died for me! And upon this plan I ought to be assured of the salvation of my neighbour as well as my own. But the sacred writers, unlike Dr. Malan and similar divines, dwell much and largely on repentance, brokenness of heart, conformity to Christ, spiritual-mindedness, and growth in grace. My assurance and hope, although not founded on these, but on Christ alone, must nevertheless be combined with these, and brightened by them, as the evidence of my union to Christ. The completeness and sufficiency of his atonement is no ground for me to believe that I am interested in it. If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his. And although I am sure Dr. Malan would be far from denying this, and I believe he has much of the spirit of Christ himself, yet his eagerness to fill every body with assurance, leads him to a strain of writing unwarranted, I think, by the example of the inspired writers, and very injurious in its tendency. We read much in his works about looking to Christ and rejoicing; but how little about looking to him whom we have pierced, and mourning! Really, from what I have known of the religious world and Christian professors, there is far less cause for eagerness to fill their minds with assurances and joys, than to rebuke their bad tempers, their unholy spirit, their dwarfish attainments, their inconsistencies, and their worldliness. To thousands and tens of thousands, Dr. Malan's notions will come as sweet and savoury doctrine, while in point of fact the matter is very doubtful whether they have actually entered the strait gate and are walking in the narrow way. Such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, that they will readily enough overlook the great point of denying

themselves, and taking up the cross and following Christ, since they can come, it seems, so easily, and sweetly, and suddenly, to a happy assurance that Christ died for them. Now, I am thoroughly persuaded, that Dr. Malan is himself as far removed from an antinomian spirit as any of us, but unfortunately he has put forth, in Christian Europe, the very representations that breed it.

THE END.

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